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THE OLD TESTAMENT

Its Form and Purpose

LINDSAY B. LONGACRE

UNITIES in the Old Testament that enable the student to organize his knowledge have been the key to Dr. Longacre's successful teaching over many years. To counteract the effect of analysis into numbers of sources and fragments—essential to critical scholarship but bewildering to the uninitiated—he has emphasized the strands of common viewpoint and purpose that tie together large sections of the writings.

In this book, as in his teaching, he begins with the first real "Bible," the book of Deuteronomy, and proceeds to explain the beliefs and aims of the Deuteronomists who compiled a voluminous history of the nation to promote their drastic reforms. Those editors, by using or ignoring, emphasizing or suppressing, and above all by adding their own comments, have guided all subsequent interpretation of Hebrew history. No less influential have been the priestly editors who put together a second "Bible" to advance their solutions for the problems of a later time.

In other portions of scripture where the editorial hand was less heavy, Dr. Longacre has stressed unifying similarities of outlook and method among groups of authors—the greater prophets, the "wise men," the psalmists, the apocalyptists. Dealing often with major individual writers, either as originators or as examples, he has ever given chief emphasis to their place in the larger picture.

For the beginning student or the general Bible reader this is an admirable introduction to the wealth of new understanding modern Old Testament study has opened up. For one already acquainted with literary analyses it offers an overall review that corrects perspectives and clarifies relationships.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT: ITS FORM AND PURPOSE

THE OLD TESTAMENT

ITS FORM AND PURPOSE

The Second Annual Southwestern University Lectures
Georgetown, Texas

BY

LINDSAY B. LONGACRE

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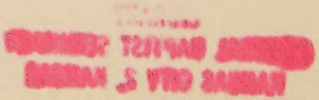

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED IN SINCERE FRIENDSHIP
TO THE MANY STUDENTS IN SUCCESSIVE CLASSES
WHO HAVE AIDED IN THE MOLDING OF ITS CONTENTS

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PREFACE

THERE IS NEEDED A POPULAR SYNTHESIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE OLD Testament study that has been carried on since the days of Astruc. Most current books are concerned with an account of the analysis of the literature and its results. This leaves the analyzed material distributed among its various types and origins; but if one stops there, the devout reader has some justification for the familiar charge that these modern students have torn the Bible to pieces. It is time that someone should put the parts together again, restoring in some measure the unity that the Old Testament books now seem to have, but basing the restoration upon the analysis which has been done—and which was so imperative.

Such a book would be somewhat like a technical introduction, but it would not be limited to that definite field. It would be written for the nontechnical reader, and for his benefit would glance at matters which, strictly speaking, belong to other disciplines. This is what is undertaken in the chapters here presented. Their point of view is indicated in the following propositions:

1. The Old Testament as it now stands is highly composite. This means not only that it consists of many different books by different authors but also that the books are in most cases themselves collections of different writings and sayings separated from each other in time and authorship. While this is fairly obvious in such anonymous books as Judges and Kings, it is equally true of books which bear the names of individuals. Such titles as "Isaiah" or "Jeremiah" are now recognized to be simply convenient labels for rolls which, though they began as collections of the words of these men, contain in their present expanded form the words and sayings of others. This necessitates an analysis of these books which will permit the distribution of their contents among the authors or situations of their respective origins.

2. The fact that the material is composite involves not only an author but a collector, and the points of view of both must be recognized. Any particular passage may thus represent two points of view: that which the first speaker intended and that which the later collector desired to propose or confirm.

3. The English Old Testament is a translation. For one who knows no language but his own such a statement conveys little or nothing. But it is a significant fact, nevertheless, and a fact which must be appreciated if the English Old Testament is to be understood. The failure to realize what is involved in the process of translation is one of the main reasons why so many Bible readers suppose that a particular English translation, published A.D. 1611, is the original Bible. Until one knows better, he cannot rely upon the correctness of his use of the Old Testament.

4. The study of the Old Testament is a means whereby the Christian may get some understanding of the ways in which men have found God. His aim will be to discover what he can of the spirit and motive, the hopes and fears, the successes and failures, of those ancient Hebrews—not so much that he may recite their words as that he may imitate their faith. He will realize that the religion of these men preceded the Old Testament, that the Old Testament is the product of their religion and not the source of it, that its words may be looked *at* as ends in themselves or may be looked *through* until one sees beyond them the rich religious life out of which they came. In the one case they are like a closed door which may be beautiful to look at but which permits no view of anything beyond itself. In the other case, they are like the same door, no less beautiful in itself, but now standing open and leading out into green pastures, still waters, and the mountains of God. One recalls George Herbert's lines in "The Elixir" about church windows:

> A man that looks on glasse
> On it may stay his eye,
> Or if he pleaseth, through it passe,
> And then the heav'n espie.

5. This involves the further fact that God means more than the Old Testament—that his presence and his will are the supreme objects of man's search, and no document or body of documents can be a substitute for that living commerce between the human and the divine out of which the Old Testament came. It is more important that men find God than that they find the Old Testament; and if the Old Testament can show or suggest how God was found in the past, it will help to set their feet upon the same path of faith and devotion which was trodden by those whose experiences the Old Testament reflects and records.

It would be quite impossible to name all to whom I am indebted. Anyone who approaches the study of the Old Testament owes a debt he can never repay to Driver, Cheyne, George Adam Smith, Budde, Gunkel, and many others. My debt to them will be easily recognized by those familiar with their work. I would also acknowledge the stimulation that came from the give and take of the classroom, and for this I am debtor to my students. My own contribution is the attempt to point out some of the backgrounds and unities in the Old Testament writings. The backgrounds are the experiences reflected in the sayings and writings that make up the Old Testament. The unities are those which modern study has revealed, and which are far more vital than the unities modern study seemed at first to have destroyed. My purpose will be sufficiently fulfilled if what I have written should deepen some reader's awareness of the reality and vitality of the Old Testament, or if it should inspire others to do more adequately what I have here attempted.

LINDSAY B. LONGACRE

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Chapter I

DEUTERONOMY AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

"If I should want to study the old testament, or simply to read it carefully, where should I begin?" To such a question the usual answer is, "At the beginning." This, however, leads to a further question not so easily answered: "Where does the Old Testament begin?" To this second question there is more than one answer, depending on what sort of beginning is meant. If one is content with the order of the books as they are now arranged, the answer must be, "With the book of Genesis, of course." This, however, is simply to accept what is found at page 1 of the printed Bible. The books as they now stand in the Old Testament are not arranged in the order in which they were written, and if date of writing is considered, Genesis is not the beginning. Much of the material now in the Old Testament had been written before there was any book of Genesis, and even some completed books had preceded it; so if one wants to begin with the earliest book, there are several to choose from that were written before Genesis.

Still another kind of beginning might be found, not in complete books, but in parts of books. Most of the Old Testament books are not literary units in the modern sense at all. Today, unless there is definite indication to the contrary, it is taken for granted that a book is written by a single author, at some definite date, and that it is continuous and consistent throughout—a literary unit. This is not the case with most of the Old Testament books. They may have been begun by some known speaker or writer, but they were not completed by those who began them; instead, they were so expanded and edited by others that the present so-called books are compilations rather than books in the current sense. This means that to find the beginning in any book one must analyze its contents and assign the component parts to their respective dates.

The earliest part is then found to be the beginning of that particular book, and from this the reading or study may proceed.

If this sort of beginning is desired in relation to the whole Old Testament, such an analysis and distribution must be made for each of the books and then the results must be compared and combined. This is a formidable undertaking, but in the course of the last century or two it has been done, and fortunately the material has all been made easily accessible to anyone who is sufficiently interested to look it up. He should be warned, however, that, whichever one of these beginnings he selects as a starting point, the study itself is neither simple nor easy. Furthermore, he must be willing to face facts. One of the most obvious of these, though for many the most difficult to grasp, is the plain fact of history that the writings which make up the Old Testament appeared centuries ago, in a foreign land, and were written in a foreign language by men whose attitudes and outlooks were utterly foreign to those of the modern Western world. In order to understand these remote foreigners the student must find his way back into their days and conditions until he can feel himself in some degree at home in their ancient, alien world. The task is difficult, and the difficulty must be faced—as Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* faced "the narrow way that lay right up the hill (and the name of the going up the side of the hill is called, Difficulty)." But as Christian, climbing the hill, did "lift up his eyes, and behold there was a very stately palace before him, the name of which was, Beautiful," so the student who climbs will find the palace.

Too long has it been the easy custom to take some favorite translation of the Old Testament and find in its words an application to experiences of the present day. This inverts the true order, which is not to begin with the "here and now" and, on the basis of a translation, use familiar English words as though they referred primarily to the present; but to work back to the "there and then" and, on the basis of what the words meant to those who first used them, find out what ideas they conveyed to their hearers. Only after this has been done can one have any assurance that his applica-

tion has any foundation in the passage he is using, and not till then has he the right to claim Old Testament authority for the application he has drawn.

There remains one other beginning, differing in kind from those already mentioned. It marks the emergence of what may be called "the Bible idea"—namely, the idea that the authoritative will of God can be reduced to writing and that it has been set down in an official document. Before the divine will was written down, when men wanted to know the will of God they inquired of a living prophet or priest. But now that there appears a document which offers itself as a transcript of what was originally a living word, the document itself tends more and more to become a convenient substitute for consultations with priest or prophet; one can now consult a book. This idea, which attributes to a document divine and enduring authority, opened a new perspective in religious thought. It was a new beginning.

For this reason Deuteronomy has here been chosen as the book with which to begin a study of the Old Testament. It was not the first to be written; its contents include much that was old as well as much that was new; but its validation as a transcript of the will of God marks it out as the real beginning of the Old Testament, in the sense of being the first of a collection of writings later to be regarded as having special sanctity. With reference to this book one might almost paraphrase a familiar liturgical formula and say, "Here beginneth the Old Testament."

The Background of Deuteronomy

The intensive studies that have been devoted to the book of Deuteronomy during the last century and a half have made it possible to reconstruct the situation out of which it arose. The biblical account, though tantalizingly brief, is of course basic for the whole story. It is found in chapters 21, 22, and 23 of the second book of Kings. It gives the main points. But one can read much between the lines, and even fill in some of the blanks, with a fair assurance of fidelity to the facts. The reconstruction here sketched

simply throws into narrative form the general conclusions reached by the great majority of special students today about this book and its origin.

One can picture the situation in the city of Jerusalem during the first part of the seventh century B.C. The city was busy and prosperous in all affairs of commerce, politics, and religion. The passing of armies along the coast road not far away kept one in mind of the threat of war, but the city itself was peaceful. This was because it was under the control of Assyria, the empire which at the moment dominated the sphere of influence that included Palestine. The Judean king, Manasseh, evidently felt that security depended on acceptance of Assyria's demands. In modern terms he might be called a "pro-Assyrian."

The political situation carried with it important religious consequences. It involved the necessity of providing a place for Assyrian religion. This was obligatory because the official representatives of the ruling power had a right to the observance of their own type of worship, and provision for this had to be made. They were under no obligation to observe the religion of the Hebrews. In those days all countries were supposed to have their own deities, and the Assyrians had the best of reasons for thinking of their own deities as superior to those of the countries they had conquered. Many Hebrews sought the approval and friendship of Assyrian officials by the acceptance of Assyrian forms of religion and shared the foreign worship for purposes of personal advantage.

The religious situation was further influenced by those who felt that—if one may use a familiar phrase—"the old-time religion is good enough." This habit of clinging to the past is found persistently throughout religious history, and it is not unknown at the present day. Among the Hebrews there had been a revival of the religion of Canaan, much of which, since the days of their settlement in the land, they had incorporated into the religion they had brought with them from the desert. It had been increasingly opposed by the prophets; and King Hezekiah, a generation before this time, is reported to have undertaken a religious reform de-

signed to implement the prophetic ideas. It was in his day that the city had marvelously escaped capture by the Assyrians; but the respite was only temporary, and now the Assyrians were back again and in full control. What stronger evidence was needed by the man in the street that the rigorous demands of the prophets, as well as the reforms of Hezekiah, had got them nowhere? He felt that the old-time religion was not only good enough—it was better!

A third factor in the religious situation was less conspicuous but was to prove more important in the long run. It was a movement sharply opposed to the religions both of Canaan and of Assyria. The men in this movement were wholly patriotic—politically and religiously. They must have been men of vision, ability, and courage. They had no sympathy with foreign influences, whether novel ones from Assyria or familiar ones belonging to the land of Canaan. They were deeply disturbed by both the foreign domination and the Canaanite revival. The nucleus of this group may well have included some of those disciples to whom Isaiah had committed his teachings and his hopes.[1] Whoever they were, they were deeply impressed with the need of a reformation in the religious life of their people. Their names, of course, will never be known, but their ideas and their aims are clear. They represented the two most vital groups in Israel. Some of them were priests who were horrified at seeing the temple desecrated by the introduction of the symbols of Assyrian religion. These priests must have felt as did the ones centuries after, when the later temple was profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes in the days of the Maccabees. Their interest would culminate in a ritual purged of all foreign elements and used exclusively for the religion of their own people. The others were either prophets or staunch adherents of the prophetic point of view that had come down to them from Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. For these the ritual alone was not enough. They demanded that the ritual along with the whole of daily life should be suffused with the spirit of justice and of co-operative good will.

[1] Isa. 8:16.

The Writing of Deuteronomy

These men left no record of their discussions, no minutes of their meetings; and today one can form an estimate of their work only on the basis of what they actually produced; but one can imagine the direction of their discussions. First they would take account of the situation already described. This would be their starting point. The next step would be to explain the situation. What had led up to it? A modern student would probably find several causes involved: social, political, economic, religious. These men, however, were in no position to make a modern scientific analysis. Modern sociology was yet to be born. For them, as for the Oriental generally, causes went back to God himself, who—they believed—would act directly, without intermediaries or what today are called secondary causes; consequently the discussions which they carried on were necessarily in the field of what is now commonly termed religion.

Their concentration on the religious factor does not mean that other factors were absent or inoperative; it means only that they were not observed at that time. These men could deal only with what they had. They could not be expected to see beyond their own horizon. Their achievement must be approached, as one might say, from the far side. Obviously, they did not have at their disposal a knowledge of subsequent history or the outlooks of later philosophers and theologians. They had only what was available up to their own time. Whatever solution they would be able to work out for their problem would have to come out of the materials of the past—their past—and out of their own inspiration. Their originality appears first in their recognition of the problem that confronted them, and then in the courageous and really brilliant way they grappled with it. The book they ultimately produced shows them to have been motivated primarily and fundamentally by their thought of their nation, their God, and the relations between them.

Their nation had had its ups and downs, from its highest glory in the days of David and Solomon to its worst catastrophe—so far—in these later desperate days of the Assyrians. Reaching back before

the time of David lay the heroic period of the invasion and settlement of Canaan in the days of the long ago—so long ago that only tales of heroes remained to serve as background for an outline of events that could merely be sketched in.

Intimately related to the national career was the national deity. It is hardly to be supposed that these men thought of a God of the whole earth. If this idea existed at all, it was still in a timid and tentative stage. They were living in a time when it was still believed that deities were circumscribed by national boundaries and national interests. They believed in the God of Israel, a deity who would be the champion and protector of his own people. This belief, in the light of their national situation, raised the question of how and why the nation had suffered so many misfortunes. If the power of their God was not inferior to that of the deities of other nations, how did it happen that his people were now subjects of a foreign power? When his people were oppressed, he ought to be able to deliver them. They held fast to this conviction, but it forced upon them the question they were now trying to answer.

The Covenant

How long their discussions continued must be purely a matter of speculation, but finally a conclusion was reached and a basic principle adopted. As often happens, the outcome was a synthesis of ideas already current but now seen in a new relation and a new significance. One of those ideas, familiar to all students of the Old Testament, was that of a covenant relation between Israel and the God of Israel. Previous to this time the covenant idea had permitted various interpretations. In the popular mind it had been regarded practically as a one-sided proposition committing the God of Israel unconditionally to the support of his people in all circumstances. But it now received a definite interpretation that gave it the form it has held ever since. According to this formulation of the covenant it was a mutual affair in which the God of Israel could not be expected to do his part unless the people did theirs.

The idea is so familiar to Christians today that it is not easy to imagine a time when it was not known; but it had to begin sometime, somewhere; and all signs point to this as the time and the place. It had been hinted at previously and rather broadly by the prophets Amos and Hosea, but somehow it had not taken hold. As in certain chemical reactions all the required constituents may be present but not until conditions are just right does the reaction occur, so in certain spiritual reactions the contributing factors are all at hand, patiently waiting to be combined so that when a spark is struck, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the thing happens, and a new thought, a new world, is born.

This is the sort of thing that happened here, when there came into clear perception the idea that the God of Israel was powerful and well-disposed toward his people, but that his support and defense of them turned upon their own loyalty to him. They were as much under obligation to be loyal to him as he was to be loyal to them. Never again could the Hebrews assume that their God was on their side regardless of their character or behavior. Time was when that idea was comfortably accepted, but never again. The Assyrian delegate they saw coming down the street yonder showed that that easy assumption had broken down.

When it is said that this idea took its place in the thought of the Hebrews, it must be added that this did not happen immediately. New ideas are slow in making their way into the general consciousness. The idea was accepted first by this little group. They gave it form and clarity. They showed its bearing on the national life. Then the thoughtful and devout took it up more and more as time passed. The religious leaders themselves received it as an established doctrine, but only gradually and in the course of years did it become the orthodoxy of the people as a whole. The people generally, then as now, took things as they came and were quite content as long as they were not disturbed. It took times of crisis as well as persistent teaching of successive generations to instill into the mind of the rank and file this idea that became one of the foundation stones of the Hebrew faith.

This little group, then, looked back over the past and discovered, as they believed, a direct connection between their national prosperity and obedience to their national God. This sprang from their new vision of the significance of the covenant. When they had obeyed, they had prospered; when they had disobeyed, they had suffered. In spite of foreign invasions and the obvious power of the foreigner, they felt that he was not the final cause. It was their God who had permitted the foreign invasions as punishment for Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant; and with this idea as a key they undertook to unlock the riddle not only of the present but of their whole past as well. Under their hands the idea developed into a sort of early philosophy of history—that is, of their own history. Having once seen their history in this perspective they could not but feel that now they understood it all as they had never understood it before. It was all bathed in a new light that threw every event into clear relief.

The discovery of the cause was a long step toward finding a remedy; and the remedy which they found is embodied in the book of Deuteronomy, the book which created "the Bible idea" and which is in a very real sense the beginning of the Old Testament. It constitutes the first attempt to place the whole story in the field of religion. Before this book appeared, the narratives had been national—with a religious tinge of course, but national nevertheless—that is, as secular as they could be in an Oriental atmosphere, an atmosphere saturated with religious implications in a way quite unknown to the Western world. In Deuteronomy the controlling factor is the religious one rather than the political or historical.

Three Factors Combined in the Book

Three strands of influence were woven together by this group in Deuteronomy, the document that embodied their plans for the future. The first strand was the code now commonly known as the Book of the Covenant. It stands in the book of Exodus, 20:22–23:19, and is probably the oldest piece of Hebrew legislation now extant. It is a collection of laws brought together for purposes of record,

reference, and instruction. The laws themselves are obviously older than the compact collection in which they now appear, but they belong so plainly to a settled and agricultural community that they must have come originally from the land of Canaan. On the basis of this Book of the Covenant one can construct at least an outline of many practical aspects of the community life of the Hebrews in their Promised Land. It reflects rather clearly the sort of life they lived from, say, the days of David down to this period of Deuteronomy. It is a deposit of the customs and procedures which, in the generations of their life in Canaan, were adopted by the Hebrews. The date when this particular collection was made is not known; but it would not be earlier than the invasion of Canaan, and it would be late enough for the separate ordinances to have established themselves as necessary procedures.

The second strand was based on the teachings of the prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. These represented an interest that operated in another field than that of the code. The code was concerned with practices, whereas the prophets were concerned with principles. Their teachings dealt with the motives and aims that would inspire the behavior contemplated in the new plan.

This does not mean that the present biblical books of the prophets were all available. These books as they now stand are compilations containing material from other and later writers than the ones whose names they bear. Only those portions of the books which had come from the prophets themselves would be at hand—that is, the original words of the original prophets. It is quite possible that more of these prophetic words were known than have been preserved in the biblical books. It is quite certain that the biblical books contain later material that did not come from these prophets.

The third strand consisted of the original contribution made by the group itself. In the revision of earlier material, in the ethical spirit that pervades the whole, in the earnestness of the appeals for obedience, and not least in its flowing language, the book of Deuteronomy stands alone, an undying monument to that religious spirit of which the Old Testament is a supreme expression.

Having adopted this interpretation of their nation's history, these reformers were now confronted with the problem of applying their principle to their own situation. If their interpretation was correct, it called for a radical reform, for there was much going on about them that violated the exclusive devotion to the God of Israel in which they saw their only security. Just how soon it could be initiated they did not know, but they were ready to prepare a blueprint that could be produced as soon as a zero hour struck. Pending that moment they could—and did—keep their book in the temple somewhere. There would be no difficulty about this, for the temple was, so to speak, wide open to all sorts of uses since the Assyrians had been controlling the country.

Jehovah, Israel's Only God

For their blueprint, if the book of Deuteronomy may be so called, they built from the ground up. Everything would depend on the character and requirements of their God, their own God, the God of Israel. He must have the exclusive devotion of his people. This is obvious today, but it was not obvious then. It may be found in the stories of Elijah, and later the great prophets of the eighth century B.C. had taken it for granted in a more profound way. But it was far from being a principle accepted by the people generally. The way their book rings the changes on the idea makes it quite clear that the idea was new and undeveloped, and that the way it is here presented reflects conditions which plainly account for the main thesis of the book. It was just these conditions that the book was designed to correct.

What might be regarded as the keynote of the book is the famous and familiar statement, "Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone."[2] Its pertinence appears when it is recalled that the Hebrews then, like the majority of people today, held some form of belief in different deities. Calling them spirits or saints does not rob such deities of their supposedly superhuman power. They are feared, invoked, and constantly remembered. After centuries of familiarity with the

[2] Deut. 6:4 (A.R.V. mg.).

theory that there is but one deity for the whole universe, it is easy for some to treat these beliefs lightly; but they are there, and they are acknowledged. Many supposedly enlightened people today still avoid the number thirteen or knock wood or in other ways perpetuate primitive beliefs.

Deuteronomy, however, was concerned not with the philosophical question of the existence of one deity or many but simply with the allegiance of the people to the God of Israel exclusively. No attempt was made to deny the existence of other gods for other people. Here, as in so many other cases, the situation can be appreciated only when its novelty is recognized. Deuteronomy is not a restatement of an idea which the people generally had accepted as obligatory and to which they were now being recalled. The atmosphere in which they lived was one of a multiplicity of gods. While it was one thing to acknowledge the God of Israel as belonging to the Hebrews in a special sense, it was quite another thing to cancel out all the other deities as though for the Hebrews they simply did not exist. Such a proposal, if adopted, would lead the people to an entirely new attitude toward their God; and it can now be seen as a step toward that monotheism which is one of the glories of the Jewish faith and one of the most significant teachings carried over into Christianity. All this is clear enough today; but in the days when Deuteronomy was written it was a proposal both new and daring, as is illustrated in the emphatic sounding of the keynote of the book.

One who has traveled in Roman Catholic countries is familiar with the numerous shrines and crucifixes set up here and there. They are no more numerous than the shrines a traveler in the days of Deuteronomy could have seen in Palestine, in the cities and in the country, set up in honor of various deities. They would have their own signs and services which the people would know and which the traveler would soon learn to identify. He could also see, as he can see today, various signs and symbols carried on the person and on the dress to ensure the safety and well-being of the wearer. He could see various objects and markings on houses, indicating that the owner had placed himself under the protection of whatever

deities the symbols represented. He could hear the prayers and other formulas which were recited quite audibly at certain times and in certain situations. The Oriental sees no shame in religion; and if his religion calls for symbols to be worn, formulas or prayers to be recited, or acts of devotion to be performed, he obeys without hesitation and without embarrassment.

It is against such a background that the famous keynote passage in Deuteronomy must be understood. It is an almost defiant challenge to the observance of the practices that acknowledge other deities than the God of Israel, and calls upon the Hebrews to relate all their own religious observances to their own God and to no other. It is not a simple abstract statement but an emphatic description of how the Hebrew should define the difference between his own faith and that of others. Note in the passage the emphatic pronouns, here capitalized, and also the many ways it is specified that the signs of the God of Israel should displace all others.

Hear, O Israel: Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And THESE words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach THEM diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of THEM when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind THEM for a sign upon thy hand, and THEY shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write THEM upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.[3]

For these reformers there could be no divided loyalties. The God of Israel must be at once the center and the circumference of his people's devotion.

The Holy City, and Its Limitations

The basic principle being established, the next step was to implement it. Religion was no abstract matter. It implied definite attitudes and behaviors. It was then, as it is now, mainly ritualistic—

[3] Deut. 6:4-9 (A.R.V. mg.).

only then it was more so. Unless a ritual could be devised that would carry the principle into familiar practice, the hopes and plans of the reformers would evaporate into thin air. But this would have to be done carefully. Religious forms are slow to change; they are reverenced, cherished, and perpetuated. They must not be lightly tampered with. If a sacrifice was offered or a feast kept in a certain way by the fathers, that was the right way, and the only way it should be done. So if the reformers felt it necessary to revise the ritual they would have to consider how far they could wisely go, and then stop there.

They were doubtless aware of all this, but at some points they decided to take the risk of breaking with custom in order to avoid the risk of letting the custom prevent the carrying out of the principle. One break with custom was the setting apart of Jerusalem as the only place where sacrifice could be offered. Up and down the land there were altars where the God of Israel was worshiped. They had been provided for in the Book of the Covenant, and one of the complaints of Elijah had been that these altars had been thrown down.[4] Since Elijah's day they had been restored. No man had to go far from home if he wanted to make a vow or offering or sacrifice of any kind. There were plenty of Jehovah shrines. But there were also many shrines to other gods, "upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree";[5] and that led easily to the feeling that there were as many gods as there were altars. It was unavoidable that the idea of one God for Israel would be weakened by the influence of this multiplicity of altars—many altars, many gods. So at this point the reformers took a definite, radical, and revolutionary stand by saying bluntly and unequivocably that there was a one-and-only place where the one-and-only God of Israel should be worshiped—and that was Jerusalem. Before this it had been simply the "City of David." Thenceforth it was the "Holy City."

This was indeed a radical innovation, but to these reformers it was

[4] 1 Kings 19:10.

[5] Deut. 12:2.

so vital that they placed it at the beginning of the long code which now makes up approximately half the book of Deuteronomy.[6] It is found in chapter 12. Its aim was twofold. First, it demanded the destruction of all shrines that had been set up for other gods. Second, and even more emphatically, it demanded that the Hebrews come to this one place for their burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, vows, and religious feasts. No longer might they follow the practice sanctioned in the Book of the Covenant of setting up an altar "in every place where I [Jehovah] cause my name to be remembered,"[7] with every man doing "whatsoever is right in his own eyes."[8] No option is permitted. The command is explicit:

> Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which Jehovah shall choose in one of thy tribes, THERE thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and THERE thou shalt do all that I command thee.[9]

At first this looks like a logical and even an adroit move on the part of the reformers. With their idea of the one God, the designation of one shrine would seem a natural consequence. From their point of view, and in terms of the world as they knew it, it was. The modern conception of a vast universe which takes in everything was far from their thought. They lived in their own world and had to think in its terms. But while in terms of that world it was an effective move to concentrate in one place their people's privilege of access to their God, in terms of the world as it is now known it can be seen as a banishing of God from the land at large and a limiting of him to this one city.

The reformers themselves were not the only ones who were limited to their own world. The people they hoped to reform were citizens of the same world of place, time, and idea. In this light and for their purpose, namely, the unquestioning commitment to the

[6] This Deuteronomic Code is to be distinguished from the Book of the Covenant referred to on page 21.

[7] Exod. 20:24 (A.R.V. mg.).

[8] Deut. 12:8.

[9] Deut. 12:13-14 (A.R.V.).

unity of their God, the move was a logical one in their circle of ideas; but its first cost was high—how high can be imagined when one recalls some other facts. Religion generally in those days found its access to deity through a variety of ceremonial acts preformed at some shrine where the deity could be properly approached. Chief among these was the offering of an animal in sacrifice. Originally all slaughter of domestic animals was ceremonial, and only when killed in ceremonial fashion could the meat of the slaughtered animal be regarded as ceremonially clean and thus fit to be eaten. When there were many shrines it would be easy to find one not too far away from home where the offering could be made and a feast held. But when with a stroke of the pen, so to speak, these near-by shrines were canceled, so that if one wanted to offer a sacrifice and eat flesh he must go all the way to Jerusalem, a difficulty was introduced that might well seem insuperable.

That the reformers were aware of this is clear in their immediate provision for those who lived too far from Jerusalem to make the journey conveniently, and yet who wanted to have meat to eat. Permission was given to slaughter the animal, but it must be regarded as game taken in the hunt. The blood should be poured out on the ground, no shrine being at hand, and then they could eat the flesh. But all sacred significance was denied, for no sacrifices were valid except those offered at Jerusalem.

It was a brave and daring step, in spite of the fact that it failed to work out as the reformers hoped. Until the final fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians a century later, the prophets continued to blame the people bitterly for their defections and infidelities. Not until the tragic experiences of the Exile did the people as a whole turn uncompromisingly to their God alone. From that time on, however, the Jews have been the outstanding example of a people whose God is the Lord, the Lord alone.

The Chosen People

The extreme to which these reformers carried their theory is seen in a further fact. Those other gods, which seem so unreal today but

were so real then, and against which those reformers were so bitter, were dependent on the people who acknowledged them, namely, the non-Hebrews, whether friends or foes. From the reformers' point of view the one sure way to defeat the strange gods was not only to break down their altars but to kill off their worshipers. They knew quite well that as long as there were people devoted to those foreign deities the Hebrews themselves were in constant danger of being drawn away from their own loyalty to share that of their neighbors.

It was out of the question, at that late date, to kill off any considerable part of the population for any reason. That would have been going too far, even if it had been feasible. But it was quite in order to point out that the persistence of the worship—and of the worshipers—of the forbidden gods was due to the Hebrews' failure to destroy the inhabitants when they had invaded and settled the land long ago. So, interpreting the past in the light of their guiding principle, they said that in that early time the Hebrews had been commanded to "smite" those other people, and "utterly destroy them," to "make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them"; nor "make marriages with them."[10] From the reformers' point of view this was what should have been done. But it had not been done, and the strange gods had persisted.

This makes clear what attitude the reformers would have the people take toward the foreigners then in Jerusalem. They could not well be killed off, but they could be avoided and their religion shunned. "If a foreigner," said the reformers, "wants to join us, accept our religion, and abjure his own, well and good; we will receive him. Except on this condition we will have nothing to do with him religiously or socially."

The inculcation of this attitude toward the outsider is one of the characteristics of Deuteronomy. It is all the more conspicuous because of the friendly, generous attitude the book calls for among the Hebrews themselves. These reformers undertook to build around their own people a fence within which, under God, harmony and

[10] Deut. 7:2-3.

happiness could be cultivated and would abound, a fence which would effectively exclude all other peoples and practices. They believed that their God had chosen them "to be a people for his own possession, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."[11] Their people were to be both "chosen" and "separate."

Previous to this it had been accepted by the Hebrews as a matter of course that they and their God held the same sort of relation to each other as that which obtained between any nation and its national deities. But this is something quite different. It introduces a principle of exclusiveness far more incisive and imperative than before. It would draw hard and fast lines between the Hebrew deity and other deities, as well as between the Hebrew people and other peoples, that would inevitably set the Hebrews off by themselves.

It was as daring a move as the one that limited sacrifices to the Holy City and it was equally logical. The one God implied—for them—the one shrine and the one people, and these beliefs the Hebrews hold with unshakable conviction to this day. Here one stands at another "beginning" which colors all subsequent Hebrew thought; for more and more, from this time on, the Hebrews thought of themselves as "the chosen people," until, for readers of the Old Testament, this term becomes their accepted designation. One can see how this principle, once adopted, and maintained and deepened through the centuries, accounts in large measure for the humility of the Jew in the presence of his God, his arrogance toward the Gentile, and above all his powers of survival that still amaze the world.

Jehovah Loves His People

Two further matters must be noted in connection with the "beginnings" the book of Deuteronomy supplies. The first of these is the significant way the motive of love is introduced as the basis not only of God's attitude toward his people but also of the people's attitude toward their God. The idea is so familiar that it is not easy to put oneself in imagination back into a time when it was a novelty. There were many reasons why a deity could expect or de-

[11] Deut. 7:6 (A.R.V.).

mand his people's homage and obedience, and many reasons why the people should offer this obedience, without necessitating love on either side. But the words of the prophet Hosea had found their way into the hearts of these reformers. Hosea was the first, as far as Old Testament records go, to declare that love should be the true bond between the Hebrews and their God. The reformers incorporated this principle into their own great plan for a purified nation. The idea had captured them so completely that it determined the whole spirit of their work. In the words of the late George Adam Smith, "God's love to man and man's love to God are everywhere in Deuteronomy. They are the essence of its creed, the motives and power of the full obedience it demands, the passion of its wistful appeals *to remember, to know* and *to consider,* of all its constant cry for the *hearts* of its hearers."[12] A reading of Deuteronomy easily confirms this. The whole book is suffused with the sense of this relation between God and his people. But the main point will be missed if one does not recognize that this profound teaching is here making its first appearance in official Hebrew thought. Hosea's vision is here brought to earth by being made part and parcel of a pattern for a nation's life. This is another of those beginnings found in the book of Deuteronomy which was destined to have far-reaching results.

The Doctrine of Retribution

The other matter is the treatment of disobedience. The reformers' code provided penalties for failure to obey many of its ordinances. Suppose, however, there should be a general disobedience so widespread that it became a national matter. What would the God of Israel do then? What could the nation expect? Were the reformers ready to provide for such a situation? Yes, they were quite ready. Indeed, the question had been faced and answered in their rigorous interpretation of those early days of their nation's history. From the point of view of these interpreters those days had

[12] *The Book of Deuteronomy* ("The Cambridge Bible"; Cambridge University Press, 1918), pp. xxvi f.

been the fatal time when, through failure to kill off the Canaanites, the nation had opened the way for the insidious contamination of its own religion by tolerance for that of the natives. For these interpreters the case was clear. If the people were faithful to their God, he would be faithful to them and ensure their peace and prosperity. If they were unfaithful to him, he would reciprocate and punish them with war and disaster. This did not violate the principle of his love for them, but if they did not love him deeply enough to remain faithful to him, he would have to bring them to their senses by punishment.

The prophet Hosea had contributed the idea of love as the true bond between the people and their God. This other idea of reciprocal behavior came from Amos, who had said plainly that the people could not count on their God's unconditional support. The fact that he was their God and that they were his people involved mutual obligations, and if the people did not keep their part, they could not expect their God to keep his. This word of Amos was now taken up, as Hosea's word had been, and made an essential element in the new plan.

This principle is powerfully presented in Deuteronomy—so powerfully, in fact, that it is now recognized as one of the book's most characteristic ideas. In their adoption and exposition of this principle the reformers introduced a factor that has given their book an influence that few other books have exerted in the Western world. In a way the principle was not wholly new even in the days of Amos, but it was now given a clarity and an application that have made it perhaps the most widely held conception of the character of God. It is the principle of retribution—that if one does what God desires, he will prosper; but if not, he will suffer.

When stated in this direct way the idea seems so plain, so plausible, and so familiar that it hardly needs to be stated; it is the way most people act toward each other; but when applied to God in the way it is here, it becomes an idea of fundamental importance. However, it must not be oversimplified. Two important factors must be included in any consideration of it. The first is that it supplied a

reasonable, intelligible basis for divine action. Over against the conception of a deity who obeyed no will but his own, who was responsible to no power or purpose but his own, whose own whim or fancy was his sole and sufficient basis for action—over against such a deity was placed the conception of one who was guided and governed by a principle that was intelligible and dependable, a principle the worshiper could know and could rely on. The principle thus constituted a sort of divine stabilizer which held the deity steady as men tried to approach him and to win his approval. This was something novel and important.

The second factor helped to defend the principle from a too facile and promiscuous application. It was the great Deuteronomic Code itself. The Hebrews did not differ from other nations in tracing their laws back to a divine origin, and such codes would naturally reflect the character of the deities whose will they expressed. The code in Deuteronomy moves on a high level that reflects a deity both loving and just.

Unfortunately the reformers did not stop with the simple enunciation of this principle. They went so far as to assert that Jehovah sent punishments because the people's disloyalty had stirred him to jealousy. They were so wholly absorbed in the conception of their deity as the sole object of Hebrew worship that they felt no incongruity in attributing to him this human motive whenever any infringement of his honor or supremacy was concerned. They even extended the effects of this jealous action beyond the immediate culprits and pictured their God as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."[13]

Parenthetically it should be noted that this is not to be construed as an anticipation of the modern theory of heredity, according to which parental traits descend to children by a law of nature. The fate of these descendants sprang immediately from the divine jealousy or the divine approval. It was an intensely personal affair—as

[13] Deut. 5:9-10.

far as deity was concerned—and was imposed directly by divine act, not through the agency of any impersonal "laws."

Some Limitations of the Doctrine

In spite of the unfortunate extreme to which the principle was driven, its appearance in its day was a striking achievement. It offered an interpretation of the past, an application in the present, and a prospect of divine approval in the future. These were undoubted merits, but the idea was pressed too far. Impressive as it is, it is not absolute. Some of its limitations were seen even by other Old Testament writers. In the book of Ezekiel, in chapter 18, one finds a vigorous, almost violent, denial of the thought that any son should be punished for the sin of his father, or any father for the sin of his son. The book of Job is of course the supreme protest against the idea that the suffering of an individual is valid evidence of his wickedness—or his father's.

One very serious consequence of accepting this principle of retribution as a sufficient and complete portrayal of the divine character has been that it has in effect limited the conception of God in the minds of numberless earnest souls so that they have stopped short of the later and larger revelations of which Ezekiel and Job are conspicuous examples. While many things happen which this principle may seem to explain, God does not work out his purposes exclusively on the basis of such incredible bookkeeping.

If the book of Deuteronomy were the only recorded portrayal of God and his character, and if it could be established that this record were final and authoritative, then there might be some justification for accepting its conception of God as the one the believer is bound to accept. But it is evident that other men whose writings are also in the Old Testament did not so accept it, and their ideas deserve equal consideration. The whole matter clears itself up when it is regarded in the light of the fact that the divine order—which is the historic order—is a path along which the light, like the light of dawn, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."[14] Mankind then,

[14] Prov. 4:18.

as now, was in the stage of "more and more." It is not necessary to project those Deuteronomic reformers beyond the limits of their own horizon to appreciate the impressive monument they produced in their great book. They must be permitted to be at home in their own world. To ascribe to them visions they could not see, or ideas they could not have grasped, is no service to them nor to the readers of the Old Testament today.

The Old Testament begins, then, with Deuteronomy. There had been earlier writings which were ultimately to be incorporated in the present Old Testament—poems, tales of early days, laws, words of prophets—but these had so far lacked official validation as "Bible." In Deuteronomy, however, there appeared a book which was validated by a prophetess as a writing which carried divine authority. Down to that time, and indeed for years afterward, the will of God was sought in the living word of priest or prophet; but with Deuteronomy, for the first time there appeared a document in which the will of God became a written word that remained fixed, not to be altered by later influences. The time would come when the living speaker would no more be sought, when the revelation of the character and the will of God would be regarded as having been made once for all in a distant past and fixed forever in an ancient document. Such a document would obviously become increasingly precious in the degree to which men would study the silent document rather than seek the living God. The book of Deuteronomy supplied the basis for this, and its influence has been felt ever since.

If the book had always been taken in connection with the occasion which produced it, such an error would not have been made. The Deuteronomists themselves were brilliant examples of the great souls who, while taking for their purpose all that was best in the past, did not hesitate to reject, expand, and transform it to meet the situation in which they found themselves, as they heard the voice of God in their own hearts and tried to pass his words on to their people.

Chapter II

THE DEUTERONOMISTS COMPLETE THEIR BIBLE

The work of the deuteronomists was not finished when their book of Deuteronomy was completed. The movement they had initiated was carried on by their spiritual successors. Those who might be termed the charter members of the original group passed away in the course of nature, but their influence persisted. It was enshrined in their book, which, for the first time among the Hebrews, embodied "the Bible idea," and which became more and more a source from which later religious teachers drew inspiration and guidance. That book made it clear that, from the Deuteronomic point of view, the God of Israel was to be Israel's sole deity, that the Hebrews were his chosen people, and that the principle which determined the nation's success or failure was the principle of retribution. The book of Deuteronomy dealt with more ideas than these, but these were the main points. It was to the inculcation of these principles, along with their various applications, that the adherents of the Deuteronomic ideas set themselves.

The great opportunity for the introduction of these ideas into the national consciousness came in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah. It was in that year, 621 B.C., that the members of the Deuteronomic party brought out their book. The biblical account of this event, written by themselves, is in chapter 22 of Second Kings. On the authority of the book, which was confirmed by the prophetess Huldah, the king undertook an extensive and revolutionary reform, in which he put into effect the demands embodied in the Deuteronomic Code. He ordered the destruction of all altars associated with Canaanite or foreign deities. The numerous and elaborate objects installed by Manasseh in the temple were demolished. As far as possible Josiah thoroughly cleaned out every place that harbored people or practices condemned by the law book found in the temple.

The story is told in Second Kings with such rapidity and conviction, and even enthusiasm, that one's first impression is exactly what the writers desired, namely, that here was a great reformation carried out promptly and powerfully to a triumphant conclusion. The situation, however, calls for closer inspection, and before going further with the plans and achievements of the Deuteronomists it is necessary to turn aside for a moment and give this event its place in a larger perspective.

The Character of the Reform

The event did not happen abstractly or in a vacuum. It involved human beings—not only the king and the Deuteronomic party, who went "all out" for the reform, but the common people, the rank and file, who made up the bulk of the nation. There cannot be the slightest doubt that for many of these people—probably for the majority of them—the objects destroyed were sacred objects, signs of their deity's presence, and means by which the worshiper believed he could communicate with a higher power. The numerous shrines which Josiah destroyed had been—who knows how long?—the places where men and women sincerely believed that they could and should worship acceptably. The priests that were slain were undoubtedly carrying on a form of religion which they and those who consulted them felt to be as valid as that which was followed in Jerusalem. Shrines are not hallowed, priests are not sanctified, solemn rites are not observed, out of sheer perversity and malice. To many of those who looked with horror on the destruction wrought by Josiah's servants in town after town, it must have seemed that the very foundations of faith were being destroyed; and for them, they were. Even if their conception of religion was wrong, it was nevertheless the only religion they had; and later revelation of its error, while justifying its later dismissal, does not change the fact that it had supplied hope and comfort to those who, up to that time, had reached no higher form of faith. Josiah's great reformation had in it elements of tragedy as well as of triumph. Perhaps it was easy for him, as it is for some now, to dismiss as idolatrous those religious

ideas and practices that, from a higher or later point of view, are erroneous. In the light of subsequent history Josiah's reformation was a definite advance in religious life and thought; but it could hardly have been so recognized at the time except by those responsible for its enforcement, and it is doubtful if even they understood its whole significance.

The consequence was that the reformation was not wholly successful. Force may impose conformity, but it cannot ensure conviction. Many of the practices that had been condemned began to creep back, especially outside Jerusalem. The prophets who came after this time condemned those practices as strongly as did Deuteronomy itself; so it is evident that they had not been wholly stamped out. The reformation of Josiah was spectacular, but it failed to take root among the people.

One other feature of the movement was the tendency to emphasize the ritualistic, external aspect of religion. The book of Deuteronomy contains a good deal of ritualistic material; and though it contains many appeals to motives of love and justice, responses to these appeals are, in the nature of the case, more elusive than responses to demands for physical acts which can be seen and regulated, checked off as performed, and reported when necessary. The result was that, even where the Deuteronomists had reason to feel that the reformation was fairly successful, the success was largely on the ritualistic side.

The work of the Deuteronomists, however, reached out far beyond the book of Deuteronomy and the reformation. If they had done no more than produce Deuteronomy, their place in Hebrew history would be secure; but they did not stop there. Indeed, it is a striking testimony to the vitality of the whole Deuteronomic movement that it maintained itself until it had molded all subsequent Hebrew life and thought. Having laid down a principle on which to base the interpretation of the national history, these men now proceeded to interpret the history as a whole. It was a task of such scope that one is amazed at the ability and energy which could have completed it, for it was nothing less than a survey of the nation's history treated

as an illustration and confirmation of the Deuteronomic point of view. How far they were moved to undertake this by the political situation it is impossible to say. The work may have been begun before Deuteronomy appeared. At any rate, as it now stands, the survey is brought down into the Babylonian exile, the closing chapters perhaps being added after the main work had been completed.

Some Aspects of Old Testament Books

The order of the books in the English Old Testament is not necessarily fixed. The Hebrews, from whom the Old Testament came in the first place, have a different order; and it would be quite permissible to propose still a third order in which these Deuteronomic books should be set off by themselves and treated as the single work they really are. Deuteronomy stands at their head as a kind of constitution and by-laws, and the others follow in the order of the historical events upon which they are based. Some markedly later material appears in the closing chapters of Deuteronomy, and much more extensively in Joshua, but this material will be dealt with in another connection; it does not affect the main Deuteronomic work.

One must of course bear in mind that he is not reading something that was written today or yesterday, but ages ago when many literary practices were followed which have since been discarded. One of these, and the most important here, concerns the impression a careless reader might get that wherever some person is said to speak there had been a stenographer present to take down the exact words. It sounds so definite to have it stated that so-and-so "spoke and said," and then to read the actual words, that to question such apparent certainty seems, to say the least, gratuitous. Yet the question must be raised, not only because Oriental literary methods differ so widely from those of the West, but also because so many Bible readers, unaware of the Oriental habit of direct speech, assume that the biblical expressions are to be understood in a modern sense. The form known as "indirect discourse" is practically unknown in Hebrew—indeed, the language itself is not adapted to its use. So when the Hebrews—and this includes the men who wrote the Old

Testament—wanted to report someone's ideas or purposes, they were practically forced to dramatize the situation and give the report in the form of an actual speech or conversation.

Such a manner of writing causes no misunderstanding when it is found in a modern printed dramatic work. One takes for granted that the writer has supplied the words his characters speak. This is the case even if the character be a historical one; for, in the absence of written records, the writer naturally represents his subject according to the best of his knowledge and belief. All this is clear enough where modern literature is concerned, but it surprises many when they discover that this dramatic method is used in the Old Testament. Yet how could it be otherwise? These narratives deal with a period already remote at the time the narratives were written, and it is difficult to imagine what motive there could have been to record such conversations and speeches in the situations in which the narratives place them, or how it could have been known at that time what reports, if any, should be preserved for a later age. With the great prophets the situation is different. Their words were the essential part of their work and were set down either by the prophets themselves or by their followers at, or soon after, the time they were spoken. But the heroes and leaders of the historic past take their places in the national life as parts of a great panorama outlined by a later writer in terms of later life and thought, and the words attributed to them necessarily represent what the writer supposed they would have said. The great Deuteronomic history, then, follows the customs of its day as far as literary methods are concerned, using those methods in the service of the supreme aim of the work.

Character of the Deuteronomic History

In Deuteronomy, which gives all that the Deuteronomists felt it necessary to say about Moses, Moses is presented as the original and supreme Deuteronomist, and the book closes with the account of his death. He is portrayed as a powerful and persuasive orator whose crowning oration is a rehearsal of the legal code which so

surprised and dismayed King Josiah. In spite of the insistence in Second Kings that this code marked a new departure, its novelty is practically ignored, and it is projected back into the days of Moses as a standard which had been operative throughout the whole national career from Moses to Josiah. This carefully worked out interpretation supplied the plan which gave final shape to the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. These books are the work of the Deuteronomists, and they constitute substantially a single unit which might be entitled "The Deuteronomic History of the Hebrews."

The Deuteronomists were not the first to gather up the traditions of the past and to set them down in order. The glory of the kingdom under David and Solomon had inspired at least two different though fairly parallel accounts of all that could be recalled of the events leading up to that high point in the nation's career. These accounts supplied the narrative basis for the Deuteronomic work down to the days of Solomon. For the period following Solomon they were able also to draw upon court records and other formal materials.

At least two methods were followed in the use of this material. One was the expansion of the narrative from time to time by the insertion of passages to state the characteristic Deuteronomic ideas. These passages were sometimes direct statements, and were sometimes in the form of speeches put into the mouth of someone who thus expressed the comment or criticism the Deuteronomists wished to make upon some person or event. In this way they stamped their impress upon the material, telling the reader how it should be regarded. It is not primarily history that was taught in this fashion, but a theology that was held up as a pattern for the nation's life. The second method was that of selection. They did not use all the material they had at hand but omitted what did not serve their purpose. In their comments on the kings they plainly state this to be their procedure. These Deuteronomic books may now be rapidly reviewed with special reference to the passages that make clear their Deuteronomic character.

The Book of Joshua

The book of Deuteronomy looked forward to the possession of the Promised Land, but it closed with the death of Moses, leaving the land yet to be possessed. The story needed the climax which only the possession of the land could supply. It is this final step that is reported in the book of Joshua. The book is named for its hero, not for its author. It gives a highly idealized account of the way the Hebrews took possession of their Promised Land.

The momentum of the mood of Deuteronomy carries over into this next stage of the story. Events in a distant past are easily idealized, and this process becomes easier as the past becomes more remote. Not only in the days of the Deuteronomists, but in the still earlier days of the documents they used for their historical backgrounds, the possession of the Promised Land was a long-established fact. It was so secure that it was assumed to have been planned in advance, or, as the Deuteronomists said, promised. So it was not difficult for the Deuteronomists to construct out of this material an account of the conquest of Canaan which reflected their own characteristic ideas. Joshua himself they pictured almost as a second Moses, not only in his general character as leader, but especially in his obedience to the Deuteronomic teaching.

The book of Joshua is by no means a simple book, and the following characterization is oversimplified; but the book's general character is so markedly Deuteronomic that it may properly be approached from that point of view.

Chapters 1 and 23 may be regarded as the beginning and the close of this part of the long Deuteronomic document. Chapter 1, in the dramatizing way already referred to, represents Jehovah as addressing to Joshua a speech in which Joshua is told to be a devoted servant of the law which the Deuteronomists had set forth in their book. In preparation for this task he is told:

> This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do

according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.[1]

Thus at the beginning of the book the Deuteronomic keynote is struck, and it could not be sounded more clearly.

Similarly at the close there is another speech in which, this time, Joshua is the speaker. He is now advanced in years and is giving the people his farewell advice. Among other things he says:

> Be ye very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; that ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow down yourselves unto them; but cleave unto Jehovah your God, as ye have done unto this day.[2]

Here the voice may be the voice of Joshua, but the words are the words of Deuteronomy; and one begins to suspect a Deuteronomic pattern according to which a leader closing his career makes a farewell speech in Deuteronomic terms. Moses had done this,[3] and now Joshua does the same. The theoretical character of Joshua's speech is further indicated by the absence of any word as to where this great assembly took place.

Scattered through the book, between these opening and closing chapters, there are many echoes of Deuteronomy, sometimes in Deuteronomy's very words, portraying the conquest as the logical completion of the plan Deuteronomy had laid down. The question as to the actual history of what was done, whether it all happened just this way, is a subject on which the book of Joshua does not have the last word. The point here is that the Deuteronomists, taking in hand the traditions of their people, have, as one might say, struck a keynote at the beginning of the story which sounds

[1] Josh. 1:8 (A.R.V.).
[2] Josh. 23:6-8 (A.R.V.).
[3] Deut. 29.

through to the end. This is the more impressive when it is discovered that some of the traditions which they themselves retain give a variant view of some of the events. Examples of this appear in the book of Judges, which follows immediately. But that does not impair the success of the Deuteronomists in lifting the whole plane of the national career to one of religious principle and moral responsibility, and in producing an unforgettable literature in which these vital ideas are contained and applied.

Following the Deuteronomic close of Joshua[4] there is a brief section which serves to divide the book of Joshua from the book of Judges. It includes a second farewell speech assigned to Joshua and a summary of the success or failure of the different tribes in their efforts to invade the land of Canaan. This summary prepares the way for the picture of the invasion given in the book of Judges, which is quite different from the Deuteronomic picture given in the book of Joshua. This intervening passage closes, appropriately enough, with a few verses[5] easily identified as from the Deuteronomic writers. The verses give a speech assigned to a speaker designated as an "angel of Jehovah"; the words, however, are genuinely Deuteronomic. The speech rebukes the people for their failure to live up to the Deuteronomic covenant:

> I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you: and ye shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall break down their altars. But ye have not hearkened unto my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.[6]

The Deuteronomic ideas are here unmistakable.

This brief passage, inserted between Josh. 23 and Judg. 2:6, calls attention to the fact that the formal limits of the biblical books as

[4] Josh. 23.
[5] Judg. 2:1-5.
[6] Judg. 2:1-3 (A.R.V.).

printed do not always coincide with the logical divisions indicated by their contents. As printed in the ordinary Bible these books appear as distinct and independent literary units, whereas the fact is that there is an essential continuity linking together all the books in this particular group. They not only are connected—they overlap. Joshua overlaps Judges; Judges might just as well have included the opening chapters of Samuel; and Samuel finds its close in the first chapters of Kings. To deal with these books singly, apart from the others, while it has many advantages, has the disadvantage of obscuring their closely knit continuity and the unity of purpose pervading them which gives them their essential character.

The Book of Judges

The book of Joshua represents the conquest of Canaan as an enterprise quickly completed; but there was much material relating to the conquest which was not used in the book of Joshua, and that material gave the period a different aspect from that given by the book of Joshua. This additional material, which throws such a different light on the period, is now in the book of Judges. It consists of stories that tell the exploits of heroic leaders during the period of the invasion and settlement of Canaan. The book gets its name from these leaders, whom the book terms "judges." This use of the word is peculiar to this book. The persons to whom it is applied had a twofold function. First, they usually became leaders by virtue of actual leadership in war, where their personal ability and success gave them prominence and authority. In the second place, their acknowledged leadership qualified them to give decisions on questions in dispute, and to impose penalties for breaches of custom. The term "judge" thus had its appropriateness even if the twofold sense was unusual. It is quite possible that this particular use of the word originated with the Deuteronomists themselves.

The Deuteronomists left these stories in the form in which they had been handed down, but provided them with introductions that pointed out the way the stories supposedly confirmed the Deuteronomic point of view. First of all they provided the whole collec-

tion with a general introduction which once more set forth their characteristic teaching. This introduction is found in Judg. 2:6–3:6 and reads in part as follows:

> . . . And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, . . . and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them. . . . And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, . . . and he sold them into the hands of their enemies. . . . And when Jehovah raised them up judges, then Jehovah was with the judge, and saved them out of the hand of their enemies. . . .[7]

Only the familiarity of this passage and the utterly unquestioning attitude with which the Bible is commonly read prevents one from seeing how highly theoretical it is. It apparently never occurred to the writers that there might be other explanations—that other invaders than the Hebrews might regard Canaan as *their* promised land, for instance, and that they might try to force the Hebrews out as the Hebrews had forced out the Canaanites.

The point is not, however, the adequacy of the explanation, but the purpose of these writers, which was to persuade their readers to accept their Deuteronomic explanations. What they wrote was planned to accomplish this purpose. There was no reason, of course, why they should not do this; but it is necessary, if one is to understand and to appreciate this great Deuteronomic work, that he should see just where the emphasis lies.

As though this general introduction were not sufficient, an epitome of it recurs almost like a refrain or formula several times, usually as an introduction to one of the hero stories. The pattern is: (1) the children of Israel forsake Jehovah and serve other gods; (2) Jehovah becomes very angry and "sells" them into the hand of an enemy; (3) after this enemy oppresses them for a number of years they cry to Jehovah for help; and (4) Jehovah raises up a deliverer.[8] One of the characteristic Deuteronomic speeches similar to the one in Judg. 2:1-3 appears in Judg. 6:7-10, only this time the speaker

[7] Judg. 2:11, 12, 14, 18 (A.R.V.).

[8] Cf. Judg. 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1.

is a prophet instead of an angel. The content of the two speeches is, however, substantially the same. The later chapters of the book (17–21) lack these Deuteronomic evidences and are supposed to have been added after the Deuteronomic part had been completed.

The stories of the judges are brought to a close in an extended account of Samuel, who is regarded by the Deuteronomists as the last of the line. He, like Moses, is pictured as a representative Deuteronomist. In I Sam. 8, although sharply disapproving the desire of the people for a king, he yields to them, but he charges that the demand for a king is a rejection of Jehovah. In I Sam. 12 he makes his farewell address, following the Deuteronomic pattern set by Moses and Joshua.

The Deuteronomists Condemn the Monarchy and the High Places

It is in connection with the story of Samuel that the Deuteronomists begin to develop their opposition to the monarchy as such. Its existence could not be denied, but as an institution it could be condemned. From their point of view it was a special form of disloyalty to Jehovah, who alone should be the king of his people. The prophet Hosea and the book of Deuteronomy had already taken this stand, and now, from this point in the story, the criticism of the kings becomes as characteristic of the Deuteronomists as their emphasis on the principle of retribution.

One other institution which, for the kings who came later than Solomon, they consistently condemn, is that of the "high places." "High place" is the English translation of a single Hebrew word. It is used for places of worship that were regularly situated on a hill above a town—for example, "And they went up to the city; and as they came within the city, behold, Samuel came out toward them, to go up to the high place."[9] These high places were in Canaan before the Hebrews came, and were the places where the Canaanites worshiped their Canaanite deities. When the Hebrews had successfully invaded the land, they took over some of these high places for

[9] I Sam. 9:14 (A.R.V.).

the worship of Jehovah, and down to the days of Amos and Hosea there seems to have been no serious objection to them.

But such shrines could never be wholly divested of their original associations, and traditional practices would persist even when performed in the name of the Hebrew deity. The Deuteronomists condemned them on two grounds. One was the immoral practices carried on at them, which the worship of Jehovah had not wholly suppressed—practices which the eighth-century prophets bitterly condemned. The other was the determination to concentrate the sacrificial worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem. They allowed for the fact that before the days of Solomon there had been no temple at Jerusalem and that up to his time this concentration would have been impossible—for example, "Only the people sacrificed in the high places, because there was no house built for the name of Jehovah until those days."[10] But they did not allow for the fact that these high places were not outlawed as a matter of national policy until the days of Josiah—or, at earliest, the days of Hezekiah—nor for the fact that not until after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. had the temple become the outward and visible symbol of the unity of Jehovah. Failing to allow for these facts, they condemned kings retroactively for tolerating the high places even before such toleration had been forbidden. For the Deuteronomists the high places were outward and visible symbols of the gods they repudiated.

It has already been noted in connection with the stories of the judges—including Samuel—that the Deuteronomists used much material without alteration, simply incorporating it in their books even when it failed to contain any specifically Deuteronomic coloring. The most conspicuous instance of this is the long account of Saul and David, especially David, which extends from the middle of First Samuel to the second chapter of First Kings. This long passage is only an apparent interruption in the Deuteronomic continuity and, though passed over now, will be discussed in another connection.

[10] I Kings 3:2 (A.R.V.).

The Book of Kings

Following the story of David, the long survey presented by the Deuteronomists is brought to its close with the book of Kings. It includes the period from the death of Solomon to the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, a period of approximately 350 years. It is doubtful whether many who read it are conscious of the amount of time covered. The whole story is told in a way that obscures the passage of time, and indeed the amount of material given is wholly insufficient for a picture that would approach the completeness desired by a modern historian. The writers were concerned exclusively with the religious lessons they wished to teach, and what they wrote conveys that interest so successfully that the reader does not think of any other implications of the events.

To carry out this intention they selected from their sources the materials they wished to use and boldly discarded the rest, saying, "Now the rest of the acts of [some king], and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of [Judah or Israel]?" They were more interested in saying that the king "did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah," or that he "did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah . . . but the high places were not taken away," than in describing what he accomplished as an administrator, builder, or warrior. At one point of their story they interrupted it in order to make a place for the accounts of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, but aside from this one break the narrative is carried forward continuously to the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the kingdom.

The Fall of Samaria

There were two outstanding national catastrophes that apparently confirmed their fundamental theory of retribution. These would be matters of common knowledge, and the closer they were to the days when the writers were living, the more vivid they would be. The first of these was the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. To get some of the significance of this event one must think of Samaria as more

than a name in a Bible dictionary or a spot on a map. It is the name of the city built by Omri, the city which, from his time onward, was the capital of the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel; and the name was later used for the territory of which the city was the capital. One visiting the location even today, where the ruins of Ahab's palace can still be seen, realizes that Ahab's father Omri, who built the city, selected a site both beautiful and commanding, fully justifying Isaiah's poetic description of the city as Ephraim's "crown of pride," the "flower of his glorious beauty."[11] Omri had given the city its name Samaria, which means "Watchtower." Until its fall it was the first city of the land, superior to Jerusalem in size, situation, and significance. The kingdom of which it was the capital included the main body of the people—it was the kingdom of Israel.

Until captured by Assyria this northern kingdom, Samaria, not only held the kingdom, the power, and the glory, and the name Israel,[12] but was the place where the first of the great prophets appeared—Elijah, Amos, Hosea. Its importance has been obscured by the later exaltation of Jerusalem and the tribe of Judah, but this did not happen until after Samaria's fall, and was due in part to the writings of these very Deuteronomists. Concerned as they were with the concentration of the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem, they were interested only in the fact that the fall of this glorious kingdom was an unquestionable illustration of the validity of their theory. They saw it as the worst thing that had happened to the nation since the days of David.

Not content with the catastrophe as such, they went further and found a culprit in whom they saw the embodiment of the evil aims and acts which were responsible for the fatal climax, one whom they regarded as the supreme sinner who "made Israel to sin." This culprit was the Jeroboam who upon the death of Solomon became the king of Israel.

It must be remembered that the so-called united kingdom under David and Solomon was never united in the sense that the people

[11] Isa. 28:1 (A.R.V.).

[12] Cf. Gen. 35:10; I Kings 18:31.

themselves were unified in community of feeling. The stories in the book of Judges show that from the time of the invasion of Canaan the larger group of tribes in the north and the smaller group of tribes in the south never got along well together, and were never really united. David, first by his election as king of Judah,[13] and then later by his election as king of Israel,[14] united in himself the kingship of both groups, but that stopped far short of developing a fellow feeling among the people themselves. Both groups wanted David, but they did not want each other.

David never forgot that his position was due primarily to popular demand and support, and because of his ability and personality he was able to organize his kingdom into a political unit. He did this so successfully that he was able to pass the throne on to Solomon. But Solomon did not grasp the situation. Instead of taking the throne as a position depending on popular support, he took over the kingdom as a personal possession received from one who had a gift to bestow. He treated the people not as electors but as subjects whose chief business was to see that the king and his court were suitably supplied.[15] The result was that before long the people began to resent his rule, and men arose who were ready to organize that resentment into revolt.[16] Solomon managed to control these movements during his lifetime, but at his death the original separation between north and south reasserted itself, and that was the end of the so-called united kingdom, which had existed only during the life of a father and son, David and Solomon. Historically considered, Jeroboam was only restoring and organizing a community that had always regarded itself as an independent body.

The account of the collapse of Solomon's kingdom is described in characteristic Deuteronomic fashion in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of First Kings, and Jeroboam is the villain in the story. His supreme sin is described as the establishment of shrines for the worship of Jehovah outside Jerusalem, ignoring the fact that

[13] II Sam. 2:4.
[14] II Sam. 5:2-3.
[15] I Kings 4:7, 22-23, 27-28.
[16] I Kings 11:14, 23, 26.

Elijah, a half century later, deplored the lack of them.[17] And in their denunciation of the images that Jeroboam set up the Deuteronomists ignored the presence in the temple of the serpent image that was popularly worshiped there.[18] They portrayed Jeroboam as the prototype of all the sinful kings whose evil doings carried the kingdom to its doom. In the book of Judges they had stated that each generation was worse than its fathers,[19] which was sufficiently severe; but Jeroboam, according to them, did evil above all that were before him.[20] They asserted that it was he above all others who "made Israel to sin."[21] To say this once or twice might come spontaneously, but to say it a score of times, repeating it like a formula, shows that it expresses a basic Deuteronomic idea, a theory that molded persons and events to its own patterns.

Having designated the main instigator of all this wickedness, and having rehearsed the list of wicked kings who led the people astray, they had prepared the way for the tragic climax. It came in the Assyrian invasion and the fall of Samaria. When they reached this event, they not only stated the fact but, without introducing an angel or a prophet or a man of God or even Jehovah himself as speaker, stated directly and at length their explanation of the whole national history from the days when the people had been brought up out of the land of Egypt. The pages of that history, as the Deuteronomists viewed it, were stained with sin. The people had not kept their part of the covenant, they had made Jehovah very angry, and at last the punishment could no longer be withheld. The nation had gone from bad to worse; it had reached the end of the road; Jehovah was through with it. It was a terrible indictment, set down fully in II Kings 17—a passage which even today one cannot read unmoved.

[17] I Kings 19:10.

[18] II Kings 18:4.

[19] Judg. 2:19.

[20] I Kings 14:9.

[21] I Kings 12:30-31; 14:1-16; 15:26, 34; 16:26; 21:22; 22:52; II Kings 3:3; 10:31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 23:15.

The Fall of Jerusalem

The second catastrophe that was seen as a confirmation of the Deuteronomic point of view was the fall of Jerusalem, which followed the fall of Samaria by more than a century. What influence their teachings might have had on the career of the surviving kingdom if they had been published immediately after the fall of Samaria is an idle speculation, for at that time they had not even been formulated. Apparently no religious interpretation of the fall of Samaria was made until the Deuteronomists offered theirs, and that was a long time afterward. Whatever impression was made on the southern kingdom by the fall of her sister to the north is not recorded.

Conditions in Jerusalem during the long and politically successful reign of Manasseh have been sufficiently considered. After the days of Josiah and the publication of Deuteronomy, there came about a change in the foreign situation. Babylon gained the upper hand, and in twenty-five years more Jerusalem was in ruins and the Babylonian captivity had begun.

The Deuteronomists described this catastrophe as they had described the preceding one. They had (1) the objective fact of the city's fall; they had (2) their own characteristic interpretation; and they had (3) a culprit. This time the culprit was Manasseh, whom they portrayed with peculiar bitterness. It is stated that he reigned fifty-five years; yet, except for the account of his sins, not a word is said about anything that happened during that half century.[22] Whatever the national records may have contained is passed over; they are referred to but not used.[23] The anger of these writers is as fierce as that which they ascribe to Jehovah himself. With passionate bitterness they denounce Manasseh as the worst sinner in history. It was his own sin and the sins into which he had led the nation which were the causes of Jerusalem's downfall. Even the great reform of Josiah, who followed Manasseh, apparently did nothing to alleviate the situation.

[22] II Kings 21:1-15; 23:26-27; 24:3-4.
[23] II Kings 21:17.

Yet how else could they feel? They realized that all the promise and hope inspired by the traditions of Moses and David had vanished in this final disaster. Their nation had gone down in ruin. It was the end—and Manasseh was to blame. On this tragic note the great Deuteronomic work closes. First the northern kingdom and then the southern had paid the penalty of their failure to abide by the covenant. If one might say of Deuteronomy, "Here beginneth the Old Testament," one might say at the close of Second Kings, "Here endeth the lesson of the Deuteronomists."

The Significance of the Deuteronomic Literature

It was a great lesson; and it produced a great literature, the production of which began with Deuteronomy and closed sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, a period of at least a century. This means that this literature was not wholly the product of a single individual, but of a group or succession of men inspired by the same ideas and purposes. Yet there must have been one man at the beginning who could fashion such a style as that of Deuteronomy, a style which George Adam Smith has called, "one of the most palpable, distinctive and memorable in the Old Testament." [24] One would like to think of that writer as one of the line of prophets which, in Deut. 18:15, is indicated as embodying Israel's true leadership. He would be one who had the spirit of a seer and a poet, one raised up as Moses had been, one to whom the people should hearken as he spoke to them the words the God of Israel would command. But he is anonymous, known today only as one who in flowing, resonant speech lifted up his voice with strength, unafraid, saying unto the cities of Judah as did a later prophet, "Behold, your God!"

Deuteronomy initiated more, however, than an impressive and distinctive literary style. It stands at the head of what might be called a "Deuteronomic Pentateuch," the other four volumes being Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Deuteronomy lays down the theory, and the four books following give its application. They take up the national traditions in chronological order and are, in that

[24] *The Book of Deuteronomy*, p. xii.

respect, historical, because the theory had to do with the national career. The historical interest, however, is subordinate to the religious. The familiar reference to these books as "historical" is attractive but misleading. In the original Hebrew Bible they are included among the "prophets," a term which much more accurately indicates their true character.

This Deuteronomic Pentateuch, marked as it is by such definite characteristics, must not be regarded simply as an academic theological essay. It was not prepared to occupy a place in a future collection that would some day be called "the Bible." It was written, as was said long afterward of scripture generally, "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness."[25] But that purpose was directed to the people who spoke the writer's language, and who were the ones the writers looked upon not only as guilty of the sins they condemned, but also as in a position to reform their conduct in harmony with this teaching.

The first success of the Deuteronomists had come with the publication of Deuteronomy and the great reform under Josiah occasioned by that book. It has already been noted that this reform, though beginning so sensationally, was only partially successful. Although enough was accomplished to give the Deuteronomic plans official authorization and support, the fall of Jerusalem and the collapse of the nation effectively prevented formal obedience to the external directions which, to the Deuteronomists, were of such importance.

But if the first success was only partial, there was a subsequent and enduring success which the Deuteronomists did not live to see, and which, though still partial, was complete enough to preserve some of the Deuteronomic teachings to the present day. This was ensured by the literature they produced, which has here been so briefly reviewed.

Three Enduring Results

These teachings included, first of all, what has been termed "the Bible idea." It began with the idea that in the book found in the

[25] II Tim. 3:16 (A.R.V.).

temple there was written down the will of Israel's God—not, it should be noted, an abstract will for all eternity, but the will of the God of Israel for that time and that situation. Nothing in the narrative gives the slightest hint that anything further was contemplated. But after it was once accepted that a document contained a transcript of the divine will, it was humanly inevitable that such a document should be increasingly regarded as sacred, and that attempts should be made to apply its contents to later situations with which they originally had no connection. Out of this process has grown that whole body of thought which, beginning with this Deuteronomic literature, made wider and wider applications of the book that was intended for King Josiah, then went on to include still later writings, and finally placed them all under the shadow of that one ancient incident, making out of them "the Bible," with all that that term has come in these later days to imply. For this Deuteronomy supplied the seed. It is hardly possible that the Deuteronomists ever dreamed how that seed would grow; they were concerned with other matters.

In the second place, the most enduring and influential of the Deuteronomic teachings was the dominance attributed to the principle of retribution, the principle which holds that if men are faithful to God, God is pleased and helps them, and if they are unfaithful to him, he is angry and punishes them. According to this theory a man's welfare or suffering clearly indicates whether God is pleased with him or is angry at him. The Deuteronomists were not the first, of course, to propose this idea; on the contrary it was ancient and widespread. It was their use of it that made it significant. In their literature they made it fundamental, stating it clearly and applying it thoroughly, so that subsequently, when their writings had taken on the quality of "Bible," the idea was accepted by later generations as having divine origin and divine sanction. Many today suppose it to be the sole and sufficient principle upon which God deals with men.

In the third place, in pursuit of their religious purpose, and quite unintentionally, the Deuteronomists performed a valuable service

for the student of biblical history. Their teachings related especially to the life and religion of their nation. It was therefore both natural and necessary that their books should include whatever national traditions and records they wished to interpret. Some of these were merely mentioned by title, while others were incorporated at length. Some of them were contemporary with the Deuteronomists; others came from far earlier times. By collecting them, these writers not only served their own religious purposes but preserved for later generations priceless materials which, as far as one can see now, would otherwise have been lost. Thus the Deuteronomists not only originated "the Bible idea" but, by incorporating these historical materials into their own writings, preserved practically all that has survived of the history of Israel from the days of the judges to the Exile.

These Deuteronomic books, so interlocked that they form a continuous work, constitute the basis and beginning of the Old Testament. Other books, some written earlier and some later, were associated with them, clustering about them, taking a place under their shadow, until eventually the whole collection became as sacred as the Deuteronomic nucleus; but it was the Deuteronomic group with which "the Bible idea" began. As years passed and additional copies of these documents were made, editorial hands were not idle—not only on the Deuteronomic books but on the others as well—so that the resulting Old Testament as it appears today shows the work of many hands. But the Deuteronomic writings are clear and unmistakable, not only in their unique literary style but also in those religious teachings which ultimately came to constitute the orthodoxy of Judaism. Those teachings in large part were taken for granted by the first Christians, and have been held by multitudes of Christians ever since.

Chapter III

PRIESTLY WRITERS PREPARE A SECOND BIBLE

The deuteronomists had undertaken to meet the religious situation of their own times, interpreting it, criticizing it, and providing plans and principles for its correction; but their hopes were not fulfilled. About the turn of the century, 600 B.C., it was evident that the power of Babylon would soon gain control of the west, and within fifteen years it did. Jerusalem fell, the temple was destroyed, and the leading people of the kingdom of Judah were deported to Babylon. This marked the beginning of the Babylonian captivity or exile, which was to prove one of the most important periods in Hebrew history. Among other things it effectually prevented observance of many of the demands laid down in the Deuteronomic Code. The most important of the Deuteronomic ideals were secure, but at this point in the story they were left, so to speak, hanging in the air, without anchorage in a practical program. The political, social, and above all the religious situations had been fundamentally changed. If the ideals of the Deuteronomists were to be achieved, it was necessary to restate them in terms of new factors that emerged during the Exile. This was done, but it was no simple undertaking. It was a long process that extended through more than a century. It began in the Exile but continued far down into the fifth century. Its culmination was reached in a second Bible.

The desolating impact of the Exile was felt most keenly by those who were most deeply devoted to their country and to their religion. Up to this time these two devotions had been practically one. The Deuteronomic teaching had made the temple the home of Israel's God and the center of Israel's worship. The temple was the religious focus of the Promised Land—the land into which the God of Israel had come with his people, the land in which he and they had made their home. The idea that the three factors—deity, people,

and country—belonged together was universal, and so far nothing had occurred in Hebrew history to challenge it. But now, with the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the wholesale deportations, the people were faced with new situations. They were now not only a people without their country, but a people without their deity, who, as they believed at first, had been left behind in the homeland. The more devoted a Hebrew was to his God, the more tragic would be his feeling of disaster. The bitterness and heartbreak of such a soul are echoed in the words of the 137th psalm:

> How shall we sing Jehovah's song
> In a foreign land?
> If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
> Let my right hand forget.
> Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
> If I remember thee not;
> If I prefer not Jerusalem
> Above my chief joy.[1]

If this darkness and sorrow had remained unrelieved, the Hebrews might gradually have lost their identity by absorption into their new environment. But there was within the community a group to whom their religion, their God, was precious beyond measure, and it is this group and their successors who, religiously speaking, were really the restorers of Israel.

Prophets Old and New

It was this national disaster that accounted for the inclusion of the sayings of the pre-exilic prophets in the later collection of the sacred writings. These prophets had been sharp critics of the religious practices of their day: not only had they rebuked the people, but they had warned them that certain doom awaited the nation if they persisted in their evil ways. At first the words of the prophets had been largely disregarded. As long as the nation endured, it could

[1] Ps. 137:4-6 (A.R.V.).

easily be assumed that they need not be taken too seriously. But now that the prophetic words had been confirmed by the event, they took on an importance that could no longer be denied. The people had been wrong, and the prophets—those remorseless critics—had been right after all. The later collectors of the sacred writings had no doubt that those prophetic words, once disregarded but now proved true, belonged with the other writings that preserved what God had said when he had "of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets."[2] With the fall of Jerusalem, however, not only were the words of these prophets vindicated, but their work was done. They had finished the work the Lord had given them to do. New voices were now needed if the people were not to lose their religion in the foreign land of Babylonia.

And these voices began to be heard. Among the earliest was the one that speaks in the twenty-ninth chapter of the book of Jeremiah. In this letter to the exiles in Babylon the prophet sends an amazing message. The people are urged to settle down, to fit themselves into the life of the new country, and even to pray to their own God for the peace of this foreign land. Even in that foreign land, so far from the land of Israel and the land of Israel's God, they are told: "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

This is the first corrective to the bitter cry of Psalm 137. It marks the first step along the way the Hebrews were to advance religiously, which would lead them eventually to find their own God in the foreign land. If one captive had asked bitterly: "How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a foreign land?" this prophet now answered, in effect: "You *can* sing it; for your God is in that land with you."

Another of these voices is the one heard in the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Ezekiel. It is the vision of the dry bones lying scattered on the plain. Probably there has never been painted a more vivid picture of utter disaster and discouragement. The nation sees itself as dead on the plains of Babylon—not only dead, but left

[2] Heb. 1:1 (A.R.V.).

unburied, the last word in shameful treatment. "Can these bones live?" That was the question, and it seemed that only a negative answer was possible. But that was not the prophet's answer. The Lord gave him a message that must have electrified all who heard it:

> Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. . . . And I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live.[3]

The first voice had told the people that God, their own God, could be found in the foreign land. The second voice tells them that the nation is not destroyed. The desolation will not last forever. The people will revive and return to their own land. These two voices laid the foundation for the development of the Hebrew religion which now began.

Prophetic Versus Priestly Plans for the Future

For these people, convinced now, on the basis of what the pre-exilic prophets had said, that the Exile was a punishment of the nation for its sins, the problem became one of how to prepare for the future in a way that would effectively prevent the recurrence of such a catastrophe.

The problem was a religious one, of course. The political re-establishment of the nation, while something many might have desired, could hardly be considered seriously. It would involve an uprising against the Babylonians which would be quite out of the question for the captive Hebrews. Neither Jeremiah nor Ezekiel had contemplated anything of this kind. Any reconstruction of the nation, from their point of view, whether in Babylonia or Palestine, could grow only out of the new life that would come from the Spirit of God. But it was one thing to hail the coming of the

[3] Ezek. 37:11-12, 14 (A.R.V.).

divine Spirit as a restoring and redeeming power, and quite another to organize a practical plan in and through which the divine Spirit might find expression in the daily life of the people.

If those earlier prophets had been correct—and apparently they had been—in teaching that failure to live according to the will of God, as they understood it, would lead to inevitable doom, then some way of life must be devised by which the divine favor could be secured—some plan which would effectively defend the people from incurring the divine anger. They must leave their God no excuse or reason for another visitation of such dire punishment. The nation could not expect to survive a second experience of this kind.

Two ways were open. One might be called the way of the prophets. This involved personal acceptance of, and obedience to, the prophetic principles. It was in the field of principle that the prophetic teaching moved. But principles are difficult to apply. They necessitate understanding and responsibility, and responsibility is something that most people try to avoid. This was as true then as it is now. If one attempts to live according to principle, he not only is thrown back upon his own responsibility but must live constantly under its control. There are no holidays. This is a hard and demanding way.

But there was another way, which might be called the way of the priests. The way of the prophets involved an inner spirit. The way of the priests involved obedience to an external program which the priests provided. It was upon the priests that the responsibility rested of knowing what the believer should do and of seeing that he did it. For the believer this is a much simpler way. The believer is usually ready and willing to do what he is told, for his responsibility ceases when the act has been performed. All he asks is that he be clearly and definitely told just what is required. This does not necessarily involve any inner attitude of the believer beyond his willingness to obey the priest's word. Harnack may have been correct when he said that originally it was the layman who created the priest. The layman, wishing to escape the insistent obligations

of his own responsibility, prefers to appoint a sort of religious agent to whom he can delegate the whole business of his religious affairs. So he appoints a priest to be responsible for these matters. This is the easy way, as evidenced by the fact that, in some form or other, it is the almost universal pattern of religious organization. And it is the way this group of Hebrew leaders chose. They, and their followers who continued the movement, adopted the ritualistic, the legalistic, the priestly way, rather than the prophetic. How far this decision was the result of reflection and choice it is of course impossible to say. But however it may have been arrived at, it was regarded as providing a scheme by which a whole people could become—as they hoped—a people of God, in the sense that they could be so successful in doing what their God wanted that they could rest secure in the assurance of his unfailing approval and support. This implied, of course, that they thought of God as one who desired, and was content with, the performance of a ritual, one who desired an acknowledgment that found its expression in definite formal procedures. A further consequence of the fulfillment of these ritual requirements would be that, in addition to obeying the divine will, they would be definitely distinguishing themselves from the adherents of other religions, thus preserving that separateness on which Deuteronomy had laid such emphasis.

The circumstances in which the Hebrews lived in Babylon would necessarily throw into clear relief any religious observances that could be practiced outside Palestine. Sacrifices obviously could not be offered at the temple in Jerusalem. Indeed, they could not be offered at all, because to be valid they must be offered at a place sacred to the God of Israel—which Babylonia certainly was not. But the calendar was independent of geography, and so it would be quite possible to observe sacred times and seasons, including the Sabbath, which now took on an importance it did not have before. Men could meet from time to time—perhaps especially on the Sabbath—to hear the reading of writings that had been saved and brought along with the captives to Babylon. It is commonly supposed that it was out of some such practice that the institution of the synagogue

developed. Prayers would have a new significance now that Jeremiah's letter had made it clear that they would be heard even in Babylon. There would be the matter of foods that were permitted or forbidden. As one reads the book of Deuteronomy, he finds many things that could be observed quite as well in Babylonia as in Palestine. It was in this atmosphere that the Hebrew religion was eventually revised, and it is a high tribute to the vitality of their religion that this devout group could adjust the older customs to the new conditions.

From the Exile to Ezra

During the Exile, however, the process was only begun. It was not carried through steadily and without interruption. The chief event that threatened to throw the whole situation into turmoil again happened after the Exile proper was technically over. Babylon had been overthrown by Cyrus the Persian in 538 B.C. According to tradition, he celebrated his victory by issuing an edict permitting captives like the Hebrews to return to their native lands. In the case of the Hebrews, even if the edict be a historic fact, it is quite likely that many preferred to remain in Babylon, where they had been born and brought up. For many of these Palestine would be the foreign land. There could be no "return" in any strict sense of the word except for those who by this time were old men. For the young men such a move would be a new adventure. Some would doubtless be inspired by the traditions that their fathers had instilled into them. Others, perhaps of an adventurous or acquisitive spirit, would welcome the opportunity to explore new territory and new opportunities. No record survives of the years immediately following the decree of Cyrus. Not until 520, nearly twenty years afterward, is the veil lifted for a moment from conditions in the homeland. In the brief words of Haggai and Zechariah one catches a glimpse of the rebuilding of the temple. It had dragged along apparently for years until these two prophets undertook to stir the people up to the point of bringing the work to completion. But the completion of the temple was not the only enterprise involved.

There were some who had not given up the idea of reviving the Hebrew nation as a politically independent state. It is clear that any such attempt would be an act of folly, but one was made nevertheless. The plan was to set up as king the Zerubbabel mentioned by Zechariah. The undertaking was not successful, and Zerubbabel simply drops out of the picture. Perhaps the move was too unimportant to arouse any serious alarm at headquarters in Babylon. At any rate it flickered out without involving the Hebrews in any dangerous conflict with the great empire of which they formed such an insignificant part. This was the chief event that threatened to get the people once more into a critical situation. Fortunately for them, the threat passed.

One other matter, even more significant than the political move just mentioned, is the strongly ritualistic or priestly path along which the Hebrew religion was moving. The priestly theories had offered themselves as the most practicable way for a revival and purification of the religion of Israel. There had been priests and rituals long before the Exile, of course, but the Exile raised new problems for the people as a whole, which the priestly theories seemed best fitted to solve. The start was made in Babylon during the Exile, and the plans were put into more or less successful operation later when the opportunity came. Haggai and Zechariah make this quite clear. These two prophets hardly speak the same language as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The emphasis now is on the temple, its construction and its service. The dominant interest is definitely ritualistic.

After Haggai and Zechariah the veil falls again as far as outward conditions are concerned. Their report closes with the completion of the temple, and one can only surmise how things went on from there—at least for a generation, when another fleeting glance is afforded in the brief words of Malachi. Although included among the prophets, this teacher goes even further along the ritualistic path than Haggai and Zechariah. He is especially concerned with the presentation of offerings and the careless way both priests and

worshipers treat them. His picture of conditions is not attractive, but he sees no way out except through closer fidelity to the ritual.

Dominant as the priestly interest was, it did not include all the religious ideas current among the Hebrews during and after the Exile. There were not only priests in Babylon; there were also prophets. One of these, in some respects the greatest of all, whose words are found in the latter part of the present book of Isaiah, had a profound influence on the final form the priestly theories were to take—indeed, on all subsequent religious thought. It had to do with nothing less than the character and power of God himself. Reference has already been made to the fact that the most shattering blow which came to the Hebrews with the Exile was the belief that the God of Israel had been left behind in the land of Israel. Jeremiah had spoken the first word that led the way out of this despair, but it remained for this later prophet to speak the word that would forever release men from any such fears. One stands in awe in the presence of the man who for the first time proclaims that his God, the God of Israel, is the God of the whole earth. That such a voice should speak anywhere is impressive enough, but that it should be heard out of the background of the Exile is nothing less than amazing.

It was inevitable that this conception of God should be taken up by the priestly leaders. They did not follow it out in the way its prophetic author did, but it gave them a pervading principle upon which to base their ritualistic interpretation of the past and their program for the present and future. The monotheistic idea—for this is what it was—does not necessarily imply or demand such a ritual as the priestly leaders worked out, but they were able to use the idea in their own support, and were thus able greatly to strengthen their own position.

During all this time of more than a century that had now passed since the fall of Jerusalem, the movement looking toward a rehabilitation of Israel in Palestine had been going on. The words of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all show this. Both in Babylon and later in Jerusalem the men who were preparing the ritualistic plans

for the reconstruction had been at work. Materials were being collected and new plans were being made that would fit into the new picture. Above all, the dominant ideas were operating in the selection and interpretation of ancient traditions in a way that would present them as anticipations and verifications of the ideas and programs these men were concerned to establish. In doing all this they were following the same methods that had been used previously by the Deuteronomists, only the aims and ideas of this later group differed at a number of points from those of their predecessors.

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

There remain two books that call for brief notice before proceeding to a discussion of the great document which marks the climax of the priestly movement. These books are Ezra and Nehemiah. For a discussion of the perplexing questions raised by them one should consult the proper commentaries and Old Testament introductions. They are mentioned here because they have a place on the path that has already been followed. With the rebuilding of the city walls under Nehemiah the Jews had a city in which they could be reasonably secure to organize the ceremonial system that was now complete—that is, complete on paper, as one might say today. In addition to the account of the rebuilding of the walls these books deal, in an earnest but confused way, with matters as far in the past as the building of the second temple. While it is precarious to speak positively about the reliability of much that these books contain, they are obviously concerned with the inauguration of laws intended to secure the integrity of the Jewish people in both race and religion. This consummation is ascribed to Ezra. Among the many works attributed to him in subsequent years, the most conspicuous is his part in re-establishing the laws of Moses, which, it was said, were set down in a document from which Ezra himself was the first to read.[4] It was a document setting forth the clear pattern of the way the Jewish people should live according to the will of

[4] Anyone interested in the extremes to which the glorification of Ezra could be carried should read II Esdras 14:19-48.

God. This is what the Deuteronomists had set out to do, but the exile had wrecked their plans and their prospects. Ezra, in this later age, served as a convenient symbol for the goal of the religious path pursued by the men whose supreme desire was to see their people secure in the divine care. If he can be given a place in history, the date of his work should probably be 397 B.C.—in round numbers, 400.

The Purpose of the Priestly Writers

While allowance must be made for the work of editors in later copies, similar to the editorial treatment of the Deuteronomic Bible, this date serves well enough as a terminus at which to take up an examination of the great document which, for lack of a better title, may be termed the "Priests' Bible." There can be no doubt that it was intended to be regarded as "Bible" in the same way that previously the Deuteronomic work had been. It was later and more up-to-date than the great work of the Deuteronomists, yet the two had much in common, and the later work incorporated many of the Deuteronomic ideas. But it was the Priests' Bible rather than the Deuteronomic Bible that laid the foundation for the Judaism which developed after the Exile, which is reflected in the New Testament, and which has survived as the Jewish religion of the present day.

This Judaism which was based on the Priests' Bible contemplated a people who would owe their sole allegiance to their God, and who would keep themselves "unspotted from the world." It was primarily concerned with an elaborate ceremonial system whose observance, it was believed, would accomplish these high aims. The Priests' Bible itself, on which this Judaism was based, is the work now divided into the present books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. The position of these books at the head and front of the Hebrew Scriptures reflects the importance of the document in the thought of those who were responsible for the Old Testament. To this material were added a brief mention of the death of Moses, now appended to the book of Deuteronomy, and an account of the

settlement in the Promised Land, now appended to the book of Joshua. With these exceptions the document is complete in the four books just named.

Current Old Testament study tends to concentrate on the literary analysis of these books in an attempt to trace their constituent elements back to their probable sources. This work is indispensable and must underlie any real understanding of this part of the Old Testament; but while it is necessary to begin with such an analysis, it is a serious error to stop there or to suppose that when it is done, all is done. The analysis throws a flood of light upon the character of the literature, but its very success tends to destroy in the mind of the student the fact that these books are a unit and must be recognized as such. The unity is due to the priestly writers who produced the present books. The great variety of material they collected and arranged is now there because of their work. To get its full impact, one must see it in its entirety without allowing attention to be diverted or dissipated by constant speculation as to the source from which a passage is drawn. The analytical study is important, but equally important is the completed work. The document to be analyzed was produced as a complete entity, and the aims and points of view of those who gave it its present form are quite as important as the literary analysis which the present books invite and justify. After all, it is the completed work which stands in the Old Testament, and which not only holds its supreme place in Judaism but is quoted by, and lies back of, the New Testament. The analysis is valuable in bringing to light the various elements drawn upon by those who produced it, but it is only the work as a whole that can reveal the aims and purposes of those who made the selections and who welded those selections into their present unity. The materials used by these men, when they selected and reworked them, had come to their hands already analyzed—separate, independent.

The Priests' Bible was laid out on a grandiose scale. It began with the beginning of the world and carried the story down to the establishment of the priestly system under Moses. Obviously this was too extended a period to cover in any but a very sketchy

fashion, but the priestly writers had their goal clearly in view and moved toward it with certainty and success. Like the Deuteronomists these later writers dealt with two broad types of material: one was what they themselves composed; the other consisted of material they found elsewhere. This latter material they incorporated into their own work, where it not only supplied a large element of human interest but, just because of this human interest, served to dramatize the successive steps of the story which was being led so unswervingly down to Moses and the priestly laws.

The purpose of the work is indicated in the culmination to which it leads, namely, the establishment of the divine community in the Land of Promise. The method by which the writers reached this goal is original and impressive. In the matter of territory they began with the whole earth and then proceeded to narrow the horizon until it included only the little land of Canaan. In the matter of population they peopled the whole earth by descent from Adam and then gradually eliminated group after group until there was left only the little nation that settled in Palestine. It was a method of elimination and concentration, and it produced a reconstruction of the past designed to reflect the basic ideas of the priestly writers. With their ideas thus foreshadowed and validated, there could be no question of their authority for the Jewish community, and this, of course, is what the priestly writers intended.

The First Part of the Priests' Bible

The work may be divided into two parts. The first part consists mainly of narratives held together by the unmistakable literary links supplied by the priestly writers. This part brings the story down to Moses and the escape of the people from Egypt, closing with the song of triumph in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. The second part takes up the story at this point. It consists mainly of laws and completes the story with the settlement in the Promised Land, where the ceremonial system is to be put into practice.

No better example of the work of these priestly writers can be found than the passage with which their work begins—Genesis

1:1–2:4*a*. Unfortunately, incorrect chapter and verse divisions have obscured its integrity and its significance. It does not end with the close of chapter 1, but with the description of the seventh day in the opening verses of chapter 2. To this misleading break between the chapters there is added the further misfortune of an apparent but incorrect unity in 2:4. The verse as it now stands gives the appearance of a continuity that is not there. This confusion could have been avoided if the first chapter had been continued through the words:

> And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.
>
> These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created.

The second chapter should then begin:

> In the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven, and no plant of the field was yet in the earth, etc.[5]

When these corrections are made, the integrity of the opening passage is seen in its true light. It is not primarily concerned with creation or with the nature of man. These are wholly subordinate to the steady march through six days to the climax of the seventh day, the Sabbath, which is now seen as having been ordained by divine decree from the beginning of the world. For its sake the world beginnings are listed. For its sake they are compressed into six days. It is the first institution to be divinely ordained, and it is so sacred that God himself observes it. In all this one hears the clear voice of the priest, who thus confirms the Sabbath as one of the supreme institutions of Judaism. In observing it one is doing something that is being done by God himself. And this God is commensurate with the work ascribed to him. He is a universal God who controls all things. He is the God of the prophet, mentioned above, whose work is found in the latter part of the book of Isaiah, from whom the priestly writer may also have got the word "create" which serves so adequately to suggest the invisible power by which God carries out his will.

[5] Gen. 2:3-5 (A.R.V.).

The words "These are the generations of . . ." occur again—so frequently, in fact, that they establish themselves as a formula used to indicate successive sections of this carefully planned work. The writers evidently intended to carry not only the institution of the Sabbath but also the lineage of Moses and the priesthood back to the beginnings of the world. This is indicated in Numbers 3:1, where the formula is used with reference to Aaron and Moses and appears for the last time. The successive lists of "generations" thus constitute a human chain stretching from Adam to Moses.

If the first part of this work contained no more material than this, its plan and continuity would be recognized without difficulty. But the writers had at hand a wealth of tradition dealing with events and persons in that ancient pre-Mosaic time, and they drew upon this for the enrichment of their rather pedestrian genealogies. Thus, after the "generations" formula had led up to a great name, selections from the ancient traditions were introduced which told vividly some of the stories that, through the centuries, had gathered about these heroes of the past. These selections are often so extended that they seem to be the chief concern of the writers, quite submerging the genealogical lists which gave them their place and occasion; but the reader should not allow himself to be misled. The narratives were not included primarily as records of history or archaeology, but as sidelights on the chief persons named in the genealogies.

It is not without interest to see that the incorporation of this material had a value the priestly writers could hardly have taken into account. In the discussion of the work of the Deuteronomists it was pointed out that they preserved all that is now known of the course of Hebrew history from the time of Moses to the Exile. In a similar way the priestly writers preserved all that is now known of the Hebrew people before the days of Moses. Moses served as a division point for the periods covered by these two Bibles, the Deuteronomists dealing with the post-Mosaic period, the priestly writers with the pre-Mosaic. The person of Moses stands at the beginning of the Deuteronomic Bible and at the close of the Bible of the priests.

There are other differences between the two Bibles. The Deuter-

onomists were concerned with a criticism and direction of their national life according to the teachings of the pre-exilic prophets, and they never forgot their historical backgrounds. Much of their material has a high degree of historical probability and with some of it they may even have been contemporary. The priestly writers, living after the Exile, were concerned with a plan to ensure religious security for the re-establishment in Palestine. For them the past—and it was only the remote pre-Mosaic past that they dealt with—was used simply as material which could be idealized to serve as a basis for their master plan. It would never have occurred to them to inquire concerning the historical accuracy of the materials they had incorporated in their work nor to doubt the validity of the use they made of them.

Finally Moses was reached. Until he appeared the priestly writers had confined their own contributions to little more than the barren list of names which spanned the years from the beginning down to this point. The extended material they had used to fill in the account of those pre-Mosaic years had come to them from other sources, and they simply made use of what they wanted from the material at hand. But now Moses, as the patron saint of all that the priests sought and stood for, was given an introduction worthy of his fame. In the first fifteen chapters of the book of Exodus the priestly writers produced a pageant which, when followed through as it was intended to be, mounts from climax to climax with constantly increasing intensity until at the close one finds himself almost breathless at its sheer grandeur and power. No wonder that Handel's musical setting of this dramatic story in his oratorio *Israel in Egypt* is one of his greatest works. In this comparatively brief passage—though it is long as Bible stories go—one sees portrayed the bondage of the people in Egypt, the coming of Moses to be their leader, the contests between Moses and the Pharaoh which led to the successive plagues, the institution of the Passover by Moses with the death of the Egyptian first-born and the escape of the Hebrews, the desperate pursuit through the desert, the final triumph of the Hebrews when the armies of the Pharaoh are drowned, and the

victory song of "Moses and the children of Israel," in which are rehearsed all the wonders the Lord has performed in their behalf.

When one reads a passage like this, he forgets its various sources, its confusions, its repetitions. He overlooks the cruelties of a hard-hearted, warlike, partisan deity. He ignores the improbabilities and follows the story through for its own sake, as he would follow the great saga of any nation's legendary past. He rises from it in awe at the way these priestly writers could put together a narrative that is at once so compact, so compelling, and so complete. He welcomes, of course, the analysis of the passage into its sources, but the analysis cannot blind him to the literary and dramatic power of the priestly writers who wove those sources together into their present unity. It recalls the majesty of the first chapter of Genesis except that it is wider in scope and more dramatic in its unfolding. And the exultant song at the close is a touch of pure genius. The whole passage shows what the priestly writers could do when they were at their best. As original authors they did not reach a high level, but as collectors and arrangers they could be masters, and this introduction of the great figure of Moses is one of their masterpieces.

The Main Part, the Law

The second part of their Bible, and for them the more important part, begins at Exod. 15:22. Under the leadership of Moses the people soon reach Mount Sinai, the place where the priestly writers represent Moses as receiving that Law which, from their day to this, has been the heart of the orthodox Jewish faith. This remarkable body of statutes and ordinances begins at the thirty-fifth chapter of Exodus, extends through the entire book of Leviticus, and continues into the tenth chapter of the book of Numbers.[6] No summary can begin to do justice to its character. In order to know it as it really is, one must read it in its entirety. But in that reading some things must be kept in mind. The world in which it moves can only

[6] This is only another of those cases where it is unfortunate that the present book and chapter divisions do not correspond with the contents.

with difficulty be imagined by a modern reader. Its customs and ideas are those native to a world both ancient and Oriental. It is in such a world that this Law contemplates a community wholly dominated by ceremonial regulations which control life even in its most intimate affairs. Strictly speaking, this body of requirements is intended for the priests through whom the Law becomes effective. They here received instructions how to proceed in their direction of the people in all these matters. The title "Leviticus" for the Old Testament book is a misnomer, because the book concerns the priests, not the levites.

This body of laws is composite. It is not so much a unified and continuous work as a collection of laws some of which are very old, some of which are new, some of which stand alone, while others group themselves into collections which are now incorporated in the present Law. While one's first impulse is to classify and rearrange the material to get it into some kind of order, it should not be forgotten that some confusion in such collections is almost inevitable—a fact to which many modern codes bear witness—and, further, that the desire for system and order is a distinctly Western trait. The Oriental has his own ideas, and he is not disturbed by a disorder that would make a Western mind uncomfortable.

In spite of its variety and extent, this Law was not sufficient for its purpose. Cases arose for which it did not provide. At or near the time that the Law was first established the priestly writers themselves made additions, before their Bible as a whole had been completed. But after the Old Testament writings had been collected and fixed in the sacred canon it was too late to do any more adding or editing. As the years passed, the increasing need for provisions which the sacred Law did not definitely contain became more and more perplexing. But the difficulty was finally met in a way that was as ingenious as it proved satisfactory. It was by the use of interpretation. By this method a literal command could be interpreted and applied on the basis of what it was supposed to imply. It was this practice of interpretation and application which enabled later Judaism to maintain in theory its sole dependence on the Law, and

at the same time to provide for the increasing number of situations to which, on the surface, the Law had made no reference.[7] It was out of this that there grew the great Talmuds which preserved those later interpretations.

In spite, however, of its ancient, alien character to a Western, modern mind, and in spite of its confusions and deficiencies, the Law stands as one of the most remarkable and influential documents that have come down from antiquity. It claimed the God of the whole earth for its God. It dared to propose that a people should devote themselves wholly to his service and to demand that, in order to fulfill this service, they should maintain the integrity not only of their faith but of their race as well. It was these priestly writers who laid down the requirements for this magnificent proposal; and this Law, with all its crudities and impossibilities, was promulgated with such success that, in spite of the unspeakable persecutions he has endured, the Jew today is the living monument of its vitality and power.

But the story could not break off abruptly with the giving of the Law to Moses. The people could not remain at Sinai. They needed a country where they could put into practice all that the Law required. So the priestly writers continued their Bible to the point where Israel was settled in the Promised Land. First they told of the dismal years in the wilderness, presenting it almost as a continuing battle between Moses and the people: Moses determined to hold the people for God; the people, selfish and short-sighted, continually trying to break away. But finally the wanderers reach Jericho, the threshold of the Promised Land, where the assignments of the tribes to their territories are all made out; and then, as described in the latter part of the book of Joshua, almost as if it were a parade, the people march in and take possession. They have now arrived, and, for the purposes of the priestly writers, the story did not need to be carried further.

[7] An example of this procedure—which, however, Jesus repudiated—may be seen in Mark 2:23-24. The Law had said nothing on this particular point, but zealous servants of the Law held that this "plucking" was, in principle, reaping, and reaping was work, and work on the Sabbath was not lawful.

Present Significance of the Priests' Bible

In reading this Priests' Bible one has constantly to remind himself that he is not reading records that were written on the spot. That is obviously true when prehistoric time is dealt with, but it is equally true of events the latest of which is separated from these writers by at least five hundred years. Even today, long after the aims and methods of keeping records have become familiar, persons and events of five hundred years ago cannot always be recovered with perfect confidence. Further, the selection and arrangement of the material are obviously planned to exhibit and confirm the purpose of the writers. They themselves were settled in the land, and their only task was to get their legislation under way. They told the story of the ages, from Creation to Canaan, in such a way that all lines converged on this supreme opportunity. Like the writer of the Fourth Gospel they wrote not so much that the readers might be informed as that they might believe.[8] For these writers this meant that the people should believe the Law to be the law of their God, and that in adherence to it and in that way only they would find their life and their welfare.

This leads to what is perhaps the chief source of misunderstanding for one reading the Priests' Bible today, namely, its inseparable connection with the world in which it was produced. It is not to be interpreted as though it must conform to the world revealed by modern science and discovery. It can be properly understood only in terms of its own world—the world in and for which it was written. The difficulty of understanding it in this way is no release from the obligation. Only in the degree in which one reads the Old Testament in the light of its own day has he any right to suppose that he understands what he is reading. If he does not do it himself, someone must do it for him. What these writings mean is what their writers meant, and the writers were men of their own day who never dreamed of questioning the world views then current. They assumed the validity of their ideas about man and his world with

[8] John 20:31.

the same confidence that men today assume that the earth is round and that disease is caused by germs.

What, then, must one do if he is to discover the life and power of these ancient writings? The answer is simple. Let him distinguish between the ideas that were the common property of that ancient world and the ideas in which—still in their own world—these men differed from their contemporaries or introduced ideas which in their day were wholly new.

This Priests' Bible, for instance, was evidently designed to set forth the Law as the divine will for Israel—that is, for Israel as resettled in Palestine, for many of its contents relate only to the Exile or after. In order to make their point clear beyond a peradventure they projected its setting back into the remote and irrevocable past, drew upon available materials as well as upon their own aims, and produced a document more expertly planned than any other in the Old Testament. Although they drew upon other materials, their use of those materials was their own, and they used them so that they would move inexorably to the predetermined goal.

They produced this work anonymously; any hypothesis as to authorship must be drawn from the contents of the work itself. Writing anonymously, they freely gave, as though they were exact quotations, the words of God, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and all the others in their unforgettable gallery of portraits. With consummate mastery they placed these characters in situations so vividly described that they seem almost photographic in their apparent fidelity. But this fidelity is to a world which no longer exists—a world which was created in six days, in which sons of God married daughters of men, where there were no rainbows until the days of Noah, where prehistoric conversations were remembered verbatim, and so forth. But, unreal as all these things seem in the world today, they were wholly credible in the days of the priestly writers, as indeed they were for centuries afterward. There also belonged in that world the device of a writer producing his work anonymously and speaking as though at first hand through the

heroes of a remote antiquity. This practice is familiar to all who are acquainted with the records of the past. And in doing this the priestly writers were doing nothing which, in their own world, would have caused the slightest question.

Only when these facts are forced into the patterns of the world today, a world in which they have no place, do they mislead and confuse. And if one is to discover the life and power of these ancient writings, he must go back to them and meet them in their own world. Only there can he know them in their true character and discover their real message. Can, then, the message of this Priests' Bible be discovered, be disentangled from its obsolete wrappings, and be stated in terms used by the modern world? In substance, yes.

Fundamentally the question is not of a message but of men. These men were not of the rank and file but exceptional, as all creative spirits are. They were intensely and supremely concerned with the will of God for their people. In this they were both patriotic and religious, only their religion included and determined their patriotism. They caught their vision and began their work in a time of national disaster. Their vision was of a God who was the God of the whole earth and of all people, who would graciously and forgivingly restore them to their home and to his favor. Their work was to bring this vision to reality. The development of their plan was carried on through a hundred years. The leaders labored and died, and then others entered into their labors. They concentrated on an ideal community. It would be one which did not need to wait for divine, apocalyptic intervention, but which would be within the scope of the people as they were, so that it could be established then and there.

They set forth their plan in their Bible, and just as the Deuteronomists had their book ready when the opportunity came in the days of Josiah, so the priestly writers had their own book ready when their opportunity came in the days of Nehemiah. They were more successful than the Deuteronomists, for their plan was adopted, and their document became in fact the Bible of the re-established com-

munity now securely founded on a religious basis. While, from some points of view, the plan seems unduly rigid, it is probable that this very rigidity was what enabled Judaism to preserve its integrity through the tragic centuries that were to come.

The fundamental message of this document is not to be found in verbal formulas but in the profound fact that men find God in their own day and in their own world. Simply to look on words that were spoken thousands of years ago as though they were independent of time and place is to ignore the men who alone gave those words validity, and for whom the words were simply the expression of their purposes and their personalities. The real message is in those men who dreamed and wrought. First, in the words of the psalmist—who might well have been one of these very men—they set the Lord always before them. With their God as their guiding light they sifted out from the literature of the past all that seemed to them useful for their purpose. Then they looked about them in the world—their world, the world of floods and rainbows, of gods and demons, of epidemics and earthquakes—the world which for them was the real and, one might say, modern world. In this world of theirs they saw reflected the Lord whom they had set before them. Finally they invoked their own best wisdom and devotion; and, in the light of all they knew and of all they had devised, they were convinced that they had found the way in which they and their people should walk. And they had.

Their message for today is in what they were and in what they did more than in what they wrote—in the idea that men should set the Lord always before them, that they should possess themselves of all that is best in the past, that they should find God in their own world, and then that, on the basis of these discoveries and with the courage of their own convictions, they should dare to venture forth into the unknown future—a future that was not only theirs but God's.

Chapter IV

EARLY TRADITIONS PRESERVED IN BOTH BIBLES

The two bibles, the one of the deuteronomists and the one of the priests, used a great deal of material which had been gathered into written collections long before these Bibles appeared. Not only is that earlier material of considerable extent, but it is of a narrative character that makes a quick appeal to the general reader. Practically all of it deals with heroes and their exploits, and the story interest, in addition to the vivid way the stories are told, makes this material as memorable as it is interesting. Indeed, many people know the Old Testament by its stories and by little else. While this material, as drawn from these collections and used in these Bibles, was molded to serve the special purposes for which the Bibles were designed, it nevertheless has values of its own that are independent of Deuteronomic theories or priestly ceremonies. These stories preserve all that survives of the pre-exilic history of the Hebrews, and they make an elementary sort of moving picture which in its glamorous way gives hints of the course of events that led to the establishment of the Hebrew nation. One thinks of them as constituting that body of Hebrew folklore which the psalmist must have had in mind when he said:

> We have heard with our ears, O God,
> Our fathers have told us . . .[1]

The Character of Old Testament Stories

The term "story" is not intended to imply any criticism of their historical content, but simply to indicate that they were written from the point of view of what today would be called "human interest." The stories about Samuel and about Moses, though but a few out of

[1] Ps. 44:1.

a great many, may be taken as illustrations of some aspects of these narratives which are both frequent and characteristic.

The figure of Samuel supplies a link between the age of the judges and the age of the monarchy. He is portrayed variously as a local seer, as a prophet, and even as a judge over "all Israel." There can be no question that he was later regarded as a heroic figure, although the functions attributed to him leave some uncertainty as to his precise significance. The stories about him illustrate, among other things, the way later generations testify to their high estimate of some figure in the past by telling remarkable things about their hero's birth and childhood. Was he always so great? Was his future greatness at all foreshadowed in his early years? As though to answer such questions there are fascinating stories told about Samuel's birth and childhood. But they are anonymous; no one knows their origin. They are told of the child when he was at an age to be of importance to none but his own next of kin. When the child had reached manhood the stories might be remembered, or they might not—if, indeed, those who had known them were still living. Then if Samuel had died without having attained eminence, the stories, however interesting they may have been, would have died with him. As a matter of fact it is not until a person has reached manhood and by some conspicuous exploit established himself as having an importance quite out of the ordinary that such stories begin to be heard. By that time it is too late to recover the original facts or to verify the later stories. What is told by that time is told as a tribute to the already-established hero. Not until George Washington has become the Father of his Country does there arise a story of the cherry tree, and not until Samuel was looked back upon as a great leader and a maker of kings did such stories as these arise about him. Birth and infancy stories abound, both sacred and secular. They are the typical tributes paid by later generations to the greatness they have discovered in some figure of the past.

The stories of Moses relate themselves conveniently to questions that arise about historical values. As with any heroic figure of the past, narratives about him would be told with great freedom. As his

figure receded into antiquity, the conception of his greatness was magnified. The greater the people felt their nation to be, the greater seemed the traditional leader who, the stories said, had led their ancestors out from the Egyptian bondage. Stories of this kind, although they arose out of historical situations, would never be controlled by conceptions of cold scientific accuracy. If they had not been interesting, and if they had not ministered to patriotic pride, they would not have been repeated and remembered. They were enjoyed, not so much because of their historical veracity, as because they appealed to the emotions and the imagination; and it was this that preserved them. It must also be remembered that these stories were told by men who believed themselves living in a world where such wonders as are related in these stories could really happen. They were wonderful and unusual, but, according to universal belief, they were possible and credible.

The fullness of detail, the presence of deity, the marvelous events, the invariable success of the central Hebrew character, the future significance ascribed to words and acts, are all characteristic of this type of story. Everything is told with an eye to the ultimate situation which the tellers wish to authorize and confirm. It is misleading to regard such stories as history. They were not told for historical purposes but in the interest of a religious patriotism. The question for the Hebrews who repeated them would not be, "Are they accurate?" but, "Do they confirm our belief that our God was caring for his people as far back as we can go?" The Hebrew lack of interest in history is evident in the impossibility of determining just what happened in much later times when one would expect reliable records to have been kept. Either the records were not kept or those that exist are too confused to yield reliable results. Illustrations of this are seen in the absence of facts about the Exile or about the period of Nehemiah and Ezra, late periods in which records might presumably have been desired and preserved.

One other aspect of these stories illustrates their nonhistorical character, namely, the way they reflect the Canaan of the times when the collections of the stories were being made. All the lines of tradi-

tion focus on Moses, agreeing that he marked the beginning of a new direction in the Hebrew religion—indeed, that he introduced the true religion of the Hebrews. Yet when one turns to the book of Genesis prepared to find differences between the pre-Mosaic and the post-Mosaic times, one does not find them. Some outstanding names are there, but of the personalities back of the names, or of their "lives" in any biographical sense, one gets at best only a few occasional glimpses. In the most important matter of all, their religion, nothing appears that would not fit equally well into the period of Samuel, Saul, and David, or even later. In spite of the theory that the true Hebrew religion began with Moses, the men who were responsible for these collections apparently did not know what the religion of the patriarchs was, and so they simply projected back into those early times the religion practiced in their own day. It may be remarked that there is nothing unusual about this. It is done by many a modern preacher when he presents Bible characters in what he calls "modern terms," unaware that his modern ideas are as remote from the men he presumes to portray as their world is from his.

The stories were originally oral and were passed on by word of mouth. The written collections were results of a later process. And it was still later that these written collections were drawn upon by the writers of the two Bibles, so that many years intervene between the original stories and their present form. It is their present form and their present use, in the light of these facts, that concern the reader of the Old Testament today, for these give their true perspective as far as their place in the Old Testament is concerned.

The stories here to be considered fall into two groups corresponding to the two Bibles. The Deuteronomic Bible, the earlier of the two, contains the stories of the period between Moses and David; the Priests' Bible, the later, contains the stories of Moses and the ages preceding him. Moses himself stands on the dividing line as a chief figure in both Bibles, and the stories about him will be considered separately. All the stories are so vivid and concise that one is tempted to read them as though they were written at the time to which they

refer, forgetting that it is the nature of stories to be positive and definite, and that reliability depends on other factors.

The Stories of David

It will be convenient to begin with the stories of David, working back through earlier and earlier times to the strange stories of the Garden of Eden. The stories from David back to Moses are found in the earlier Deuteronomic Bible and are used in the service of the Deuteronomists. The stories from Moses back to the Garden of Eden belong to the late Priests' Bible and are used in the service of the priestly writers. It is true that the Deuteronomic writers included a few stories of the prophets Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah that are later than David, but with these few exceptions practically no stories appear after the days of Solomon. It looks as if they had been collected up to the days of Solomon because the intention of the collectors was to tell the story of the people to the point where "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon," [2] beyond which time the court records supplied all the materials the Deuteronomists needed.

One advantage of beginning with the David stories is that they include a poem that comes from David himself. It is the elegy over Saul and Jonathan.[3] Its feeling and beauty have long been recognized. Not without interest is the statement[4] that it was taken from a "book," which may have been a collection similar to those from which the hero stories were taken. This book is mentioned also in Josh. 10:12-13, where another selection from it is given. David's elegy over Abner[5] is much briefer—too brief to develop a literary distinction comparable to that of the other. In view of the later tradition that David was a writer of psalms, it seems strange that no poem of that type appears in these approximately contemporary records. These two poems, the only ones preserved, while showing deep feeling, contain nothing specifically religious.

[2] I Kings 2:46.
[3] II Sam. 1:19-27.
[4] II Sam. 1:18.
[5] II Sam. 3:33-34.

Another advantage of the David stories is that among them there is a passage which has long been recognized as an example of the best historical writing that has come down from antiquity. It is found in chapters 9–20 of Second Samuel, and closes with the first two chapters of First Kings. It is concerned with the rebellion of Absalom and the question of who should succeed David on the throne. But it includes many side issues and episodes, all of which are knit together into a compact narrative.

It must have been written by one who was near enough to the events to be an eyewitness of some of them; and whoever he was, he was a master of the art of narration. His portrayal of personalities and situations is unforgettable. There is nothing artificial about it. Nothing is told that someone in the neighborhood might not have known. There are no mysterious causes at work and no pious explanations of what happens. Even God himself appears in the picture only as anyone might find him there. He is not described as intervening in miraculous ways, nor as holding conversations with any of the persons involved. Anything like the common notion of the miraculous is conspicuously absent. Neither is there any tipping of the scales in favor of a particular point of view or particular hero. The whole presentation is what today is called objective. One cannot tell whether the writer favors Absalom or David, Adonijah or Solomon. He just tells what happened. In short, it is a masterpiece of narration and fully justifies what was said of its author by the late Professor William R. Arnold of Harvard:

> It is the misfortune of this great man that his writings have come down to us within the bounds of an ecclesiastical canon of Holy Scripture; otherwise students of the humanities would hardly continue to ignore a prose which, for combined simplicity and distinction, has remained unmatched in the literature of the world, and which the progressive sophistication of mankind has long since rendered forever unapproachable.[6]

This reference was, of course, to the original Hebrew, but the writ-

[6] *Ephod and Ark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), p. 118.

ing has a distinction that cannot be wholly obscured even in a translation.

This passage stands alone in its combined literary artistry, objectivity, and historical veracity. As one moves back from it in the direction of the earlier stories, he finds less and less objectivity and more and more traits characteristic of the folktale. This does not mean that the stories are wholly untrustworthy, but only that in reading them one must distinguish between what is probable fact and what is due to the interest of the storyteller in his theme and in his audience. Such collections as those from which the present stories were taken were not made at random, but in the interest of some dominant aim that determined what stories should be included. Those now preserved in the Deuteronomic Bible led up to the climax of the kingdom's glory in the reign of Solomon. They were selected and preserved with this in mind, and it may well be that their present contents were to some extent modified by the fact that they all were intended to point in that direction. This becomes clear as soon as one considers that without that consummation these stories could have been only local and ephemeral, and that the document in which they now stand would never have been written.

Even the stories of David begin to show these influences, and as they go back to his earlier years the tendency to glorify him becomes more and more evident. His relations with Saul as here told must rest on some basis of fact, but the contrast between the two men is so strongly emphasized, and always to David's advantage, that one begins to suspect the hand of a partisan who, writing perhaps in the days of Solomon, is determined to describe David as favorably as possible. He has done this so successfully that the unfavorable aspects of David's character and behavior are usually forgotten, although the Deuteronomists included some accounts of these as well. As one goes back still further, to David's youth, the glorification motive is even more noticeable. It is told that he killed the giant Goliath and, at a still earlier age, was even anointed by Samuel as the one destined to be the king of Israel—an incident that fits awkwardly alongside the accounts of the later anointings: first by the men of

Judah to be "king over the house of Judah" [7] and again by the men of the northern tribes to be king over Israel.[8]

Saul, Samuel, and the Judges

The stories of Saul are so overshadowed by the glorification of David it is almost surprising that he gets as much credit as he does. Yet it is hard to account for the place he holds unless he was more of a success than a superficial reading of these stories would lead one to expect. Between the lines of the stories that are preserved one discerns a figure of energy and earnestness, one who was frank and brave but no match for the adroitness of David, who certainly gave Saul good grounds for his suspicion. His tragic end was that of a hero overpowered by forces he could not conquer. Like the apostle Paul he had to fight a thorn in the flesh, but whether this was the cause or the consequence of the desperate situations he had to face is now beyond discovery. The stories are too brief and fragmentary for any account of his actual career, and this inadequacy is only one of the evidences that no life story of Saul was contemplated, even if the materials were available in the written records from which these stories were taken.

The stories about Samuel, Saul, and David are linked with each other in such a way that in reading them one feels a steady progress in the narrative. This feeling is not weakened even when one is aware of the composite character of the present text. But this sense of progression is lost when one moves back into the period preceding Samuel, to the stories that are now found in the book of Judges. Here the stories are much more loosely strung together. One can easily be omitted without a noticeable break in the continuity, and it is not even clear whether they necessarily follow each other in their present order or whether some of them refer to events that happened at the same time in different parts of the country.

They lead back finally to the beginning of the Hebrew invasion and thus supply the raw material from which an approximate out-

[7] II Sam. 2:4.
[8] II Sam. 5:3.

line of the invasion and settlement can be reconstructed. The result differs considerably from the picture given in the book of Joshua, because of the way the material in Joshua was molded to suit the particular purposes of the Deuteronomic and priestly writers. The stories preserved in the book of Judges stand much nearer to the persons and events with which they deal than do the accounts in the book of Joshua, and in spite of their popular character—or because of it—they throw valuable light on the probable course of events. It is the original stories which are valuable in this way, and they need to be lifted out of the framework in which the Deuteronomists placed them.

A convenient illustration of the difference between story and framework is the section on Ehud in Judg. 3:12-30. The passage begins in its Deuteronomic way with a characteristic theological generalization explaining what the Lord did and why he did it, thus preparing the reader to approach it from the Deuteronomic point of view. It generalizes in the reference to "the children of Israel," as though the people were already a national unit. The idea of national unity at this time is contradicted not only by the tribal stories, of which this is one, but also by the way David is later exalted as the man who established the united nation. The mention of the eighteen years, without a hint of what happened during that time, leads to the closing statement that the Lord raised up a savior. With that word the whole scene changes. The generalizations, the theological interpretations, and the blank, silent years vanish to make way for the story of Ehud. The story is told with rapidity and vividness, a typical folktale, and comes to a natural close at verse 28.

The story, when lifted out of its Deuteronomic framework, is obviously tribal and local, and is so fresh and natural—not to say frank—that it can only be regarded as essentially true. If the Deuteronomists who later used the story, and who thus preserved it for future years, wanted to use this and other stories to illustrate their special point of view by incorporating them in their Bible, there was no reason why they should not do so. A reader today finds double value in such passages, because he is thus enabled to dis-

tinguish between the teaching of the Deuteronomists and the historical material they preserved. Both have their value.

The passage that by common consent comes closest to the event it celebrates is the poem in the fifth chapter of Judges known as the "Song of Deborah," a poem (ballad?) written in all probability by a contemporary, and perhaps even by someone who took part in the battle. This would give it a high antiquity. It has been said that "it is the oldest extant monument of Hebrew literature, and the only contemporaneous monument of Hebrew history before the foundation of the kingdom."[9] This opinion is practically unanimous, but the idea calls for a brief comment. It is so generally supposed that if one looks for the oldest Old Testament writing he will find it in the Pentateuch, that to say it is to be found in the fifth chapter of Judges is to many somewhat of a surprise. But it will surprise no one who has really learned that the present order of the books, or even the present arrangement of material within the books, is not due to chronological considerations. The present order, which in the Deuteronomic Bible follows in a general way the probable course of the history, is due to the compilers and arrangers, who did their work so long after the events, and were so concerned with their prophetic or priestly purposes, that the relative dates of the materials they used were the last things they thought of; enough that the materials were available and that they served the purpose in hand.

Moses in the Deuteronomic Bible

Moving back still further in the Deuteronomic Bible, one reaches its beginning in the book of Deuteronomy and the person of Moses. In view of the stories of Moses that were extant when Deuteronomy was written, it is surprising to see that so many were disregarded in this earliest Bible. In this document, written at least five hundred years after the days of Moses, he is presented as a Deuteronomic orator who announces the Deuteronomic Code, after which he disappears. The two long addresses which precede the code itself give rapid reviews of the experiences in the wilderness in which Moses

[9] G. F. Moore, *Judges* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), p. 132.

was involved. But the addresses contain almost as much exhortation as they do narrative, and the part Moses had to play in the story is not expanded.

Perhaps the Deuteronomists assumed that these traditions were sufficiently well known not to need repetition. Nevertheless it is worth remarking that this Deuteronomic Code, which at its outset claims the authority of Moses, should have so little to say about him afterward. He is not even named in the account of how the book was brought out of the temple in the days of Josiah. Indeed, it is one of the surprises for those who are interested in such curiosities to discover how rarely the name of Moses appears in the Deuteronomic Bible.

It is worth noting also how little of the material which the Deuteronomists collected and incorporated in their Bible would today be called religious. The stories deal mainly with heroes and their exploits. The Deuteronomic settings offer them as examples of the way the God of Israel dealt with unfaithfulness, but the stories themselves frequently do not indicate any such purpose. When they refer to deity at all it is in the colloquial way that is part of common speech rather than of vital religion—just as many nonreligious folk today "thank God" for some favorable event in the past, or hope "with God's help" to accomplish something in the future. These stories almost without exception are personal and patriotic. That they should be regarded as possessing a religious character is due mainly to the way of the Deuteronomists imposed their own religious interpretations on all their material.

Stories in the Priests' Bible

Turning now to the Priests' Bible, one may recall that although it had its beginnings in the Exile it is mainly a postexilic work; and yet, paradoxically enough, it is this latest work which has preserved the stories dealing with the earliest times. These stories have quite a different character from those used by the Deuteronomists. They deal with chapters of Hebrew tradition which were closed before the days of Moses, closed before there could be any national records,

closed before a nation was dreamed of, closed without any bridge that connected them with subsequent history. With the traditional slavery in Egypt the stories reach a kind of jumping-off place, a disastrous close to a vanished past. Joseph and his generation are dead; the Hebrews multiply; there arises "a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." [10] These few words do not indicate how many generations are included in this period, but they indicate quite clearly that any development of the Hebrew people from slavery to a nation must be from the ground up. Whatever develops after this will be something new, with Moses leading on. It is important to emphasize the sharp break out of which the figure of Moses emerges, in order not to obscure the differences in character and subject between the pre-Mosaic stories preserved in the Priests' Bible and the post-Mosaic stories preserved by the Deuteronomists.

Before taking up the stories found in the Priests' Bible it is worth recalling that one of the most original and successful projects of Old Testament study has been the identification of the strands of literary material that compose the book of Genesis. It is now recognized that in Genesis the work of the priestly writers constitutes a basis or frame into which are fitted the interwoven selections from documents written in the days when the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were at the height of their powers. The Deuteronomists had drawn upon these collections for the stories they had used, but they left untouched both the stories of pre-Mosaic times and the stories about Moses himself. During the Exile, when the surviving literature of the Hebrews was being collected, restudied, expanded, and arranged, the priestly writers took up the stories the Deuteronomists had discarded and used them in their own great document. They may have been moved by the desire to preserve the material, and they certainly were moved by the intention to enrich and confirm their own work, in much the same way that the Deuteronomists had used the hero tales in the book of Judges. The Hebrew story subsequent to Moses would be easily accessible in the Bible of the Deuteronomists, which must have been available.

[10] Exod. 1:6-8.

The stories of pre-Mosaic times preserved in the Priests' Bible are now in the book of Genesis, where they present a fairly continuous narrative. There are two outstanding facts which, among others, lie back of the present form and arrangement of many of these stories. The first one reaches back to their origin. They were associated with the Canaanite shrines which were sacred before the Hebrews arrived. The Hebrews accepted the sacredness of the places but soon associated them with their own patriarchs, substituting these for the original Canaanite ones. This is why Bethel, Hebron, Beersheba, and other places, even in these stories, are described rather naïvely as being adopted by the Hebrews.

The second fact is retroactive. It springs from the tribal system which the later Hebrews regarded as their original form of organization—one which even the glories of the united kingdom did not abrogate. But it is in Canaan that the tribes first appeared, not in Egypt nor in the wilderness. Their projection back into some of the stories in Genesis is due to the way the original stories were molded to reflect the ideas of these latest writers. For these and other reasons the life history of these stories may have been somewhat as follows: (1) the original stories, many of which arose in Canaan; (2) their adoption by the Hebrews and their retelling in terms of the Hebrew patriarchs; (3) their collection during the early monarchy as a patriotic move to preserve what had been handed down from the fathers; and (4) their use by the late priestly writers to show how the beginnings of the holy nation had been divinely guided.

The Oldest Stories

The short first part of Genesis (chapters 1–11, approximately one fifth of the whole book) contains some of the most famous and familiar stories in the Old Testament. In addition to the account of the institution of the Sabbath with which the priestly writers began their Bible, there are here the stories of the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the men before the flood who lived such long lives, the flood itself, the tower of Babel, and the distribution of the nations after the flood. These stories stand on the opening pages of the Old

Testament so that for one who starts to read his Bible "from the beginning" they are the first things encountered. They are profoundly interesting both in the way they are told and in the subjects with which they deal. They move in an atmosphere of magic and mystery that has universal appeal. Above all, they are regarded by the majority of those who read them as being uniquely sacred as well as literally true. Only on this basis could the third chapter have been interpreted in a way that has dominated all Christian thought—*Christian,* not Jewish, thought; for this story, which in its familiar interpretation is called "The Fall," plays no part anywhere else in the Old Testament, nor does the Old Testament anywhere identify the serpent as Satan. Yet many of the ideas that are held about these stories are felt by those who hold them to be as authentic as the stories themselves.

This is unfortunate, for some of these ideas are erroneous. For example, man did not appear on the earth in either of the ways described in chapters 1 and 2. Pain and death were here before man came and may well have been important factors in his gradual emergence from savagery. He fought his way up, not out of a blissful Eden, but out of the fierce conflicts of the stone age. The age of bronze and the age of iron are too widely separated for the same man to have discovered the art of smelting and forging both these metals.

Further, there is no Cain nor Abel in the genealogy of Adam given in chapter 5. The ancient manuscripts do not agree on the ages of those patriarchs who lived so long; the Hebrew text gives the total number of years from the creation of man to the flood as 1,656 years, the Samaritan as 1,307 years, and the Septuagint as 2,262 years. The account of the flood contains items that plainly show it to be a fusion of two quite different stories. The names given in the genealogical list in chapter 10, although set down as of individuals, are really the names of the nations that are represented as peopling the world after the flood—although much of the world as it is now known is lacking.

These are by no means all the facts involved, but they are enough

to make quite clear the general character of these famous chapters. They are made up of traditions concerning events that were supposed to have happened in the dim and distant past when human life and occupations were just beginning. These are not the original stories, of course, but the stories as told by the Hebrews in later ages. Obviously they are told in Hebrew, the language which underlies, for instance, the names given to Eve.[11] They are told from the point of view of the Hebrew religion—the religion that theoretically began with Moses! All this causes no surprise when it is recalled that they now appear in a late document, the Priests' Bible, whose purpose was to tie in the religion of Israel with all past history, even the most remote, and to justify it as the supreme concern of the God of Israel from the beginning of time.

The Stories of Moses

There remain the stories of Moses. Both the Deuteronomic and Priests' Bibles represent him as standing at the beginning of the true Hebrew religion; but it is the Priests' Bible that has preserved a cluster of stories about him of the most amazing character, which picture him as almost superhuman. Beneath the surface of these stories, however, one becomes aware of a great tradition. All the events of the legendary past, vague as the memory of them might be, and extravagant as the stories were that in the course of the years grew out of them, converged on a figure that holds a unique place in Hebrew history—Moses, the servant of his God. The stories picture him variously as levite, priest, prophet, wonder-worker, leader, organizer, administrator, judge, and lawgiver; and perhaps he functioned in all these capacities at one time or another. But his greatest significance is seen in the threefold character in which he is now generally recognized.

The purpose of the writers of the two great Bibles must be kept constantly in mind. Their problem was not the historical one of discovering the facts about the original Moses. They would not have been interested in such a project even if the materials had

[11] Gen. 2:23; 3:20.

been at hand or the processes of historical research had been developed. It was rather the problem of how, in their own situations and in what they felt to be their people's greatest need, they could validate their plans for recovery. Was there any towering figure of the past to whom they could appeal, whose work they could feel they were continuing, and whose authority would place their plans and purposes beyond question?

They found their answer in the person of Moses—the Moses of the ancient stories; the Moses who stood at the beginning of the great series of events out of which the nation was born; the Moses who, tradition said, was the guide and lawgiver during the years in the wilderness. He was the person who alone would have the far-seeing wisdom and the firm hand to provide and to put into operation any plans adequate to the perpetuation or the re-establishment of the nation.

The stories gave them their inspiration. In these Moses appears as the divinely appointed leader under whom the Hebrews escape from Egypt and are led finally to the Promised Land. His qualities are only heightened by the way the people are represented as being refractory from the first. They utterly lack the confidence in Moses that he has in himself. They are timid, selfish, short-sighted, stubborn. They do not understand their leader's plans or purposes, but complain and rebel.

One of their vivid scenes is in Exodus 32 and 33. Back of this story one discerns a Moses who was too loyal to his people to let Jehovah cast them off, and too loyal to Jehovah to allow the people to insult their God with impunity. In this tense situation Moses is portrayed as fiercely angry and bitterly ruthless, yet supremely devoted both to his people and to his God, and willing to sacrifice himself on the altar of his devotion. The depths of his feeling and the acuteness of his predicament are reflected in the outburst reported in another place: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. . . . Kill me . . . out of hand, . . . and let me not see my wretchedness." [12]

[12] Num. 11:14-15.

But the stories have no place for any final defeat. In spite of the opposition of the people, in spite of the extremes to which Moses himself is sometimes driven, he holds the people together and himself steady until, by the time the Promised Land is reached, a nation is in the making. It is still incomplete, but the start has been made, thanks to the great Moses who has triumphed over all obstacles and who, in these stories, is forever to be remembered, if not as the "Father of his Country," yet, quite as significantly, as the father of his nation.

From the idea of Moses as the father of the nation it was but a short and easy step to the idea of Moses as the founder of the Law. A second group of stories portrays him in this character. In them he appears not only as one who had a unique part in starting the nation on its way, but as one who had a unique intimacy with the God of Israel. In this character he is represented as receiving at first hand divine directions for the general ordering of domestic and social life. These directions even include provisions for civil and criminal procedures. In this connection the stories ascribe to him the earliest code of laws they knew. Most of these belonged to the agricultural life of Canaan and were in operation when the Hebrews arrived, but they had been taken over by the Hebrews along with the land and its religion. By the time the stories had been reduced to writing and had taken shape in the collections from which the later Deuteronomists and priests were to draw, Moses belonged to such a remote past, and the laws had been so long taken for granted, that their actual origin was unknown and they could quite innocently be regarded as a heritage bequeathed to the nation by some great traditional leader of the past. The ascription of them to Moses made him the one who under divine instruction had laid the basis for the body of laws which, first by the Deuteronomists and later by the priests, was looked upon as fundamental to the nation's true character. The stories thus supplied the later Bibles with the material on which rests their representation of Moses as the great lawgiver of Israel.

A third and no less important aspect of Moses is offered in the

way he is portrayed as the man to whom the God of Israel first made himself known. The priestly writers found in this story the perfect evidence for the authority of Moses. Not only was he the father of the nation and the founder of the Law, but he was the revealer of the deity whose religion, in the days of the Priests' Bible, had become Israel's unique distinction.

The Deuteronomists had been concerned for the nation as such and had hoped for a political independence that would be prosperous and secure. For the later priestly writers political independence was out of the question. Their concern was for their religion and for that alone. The story that represented Moses as the person who had brought the Hebrews and their God together in the first place supplied the perfect basis for finding in Moses the source and authority for the later priestly law. Thus Deuteronomist and priest together established the significance of the great person of Moses, whom the stories had described with such color and vividness. Enshrined in the two great Bibles he has ever since been known as the founder of the Hebrew nation, the giver of the Law, and the revealer of the Hebrew religion.

When, in the interest of modern historical research, one tries to push aside the veil with which the stories have adorned but obscured him, one discovers only a vague and shadowy outline,

> Faint as a figure seen in early dawn
> Down at the far end of an avenue.[13]

But after the pure wheat of probability in the stories has been sifted out from the chaff of their antique imaginations and credulities, there remains too rich a harvest to permit one to dismiss them as negligible. Back of them lies history. Most of it is irrecoverable. But against that nebulous background there stands out this famous and impressive figure of Moses, the servant of his God.

These were the tales the fathers told. The religious use of them made by the Deuteronomists and the priestly writers, continued ever

[13] Tennyson, "Enoch Arden."

since, has obscured their true character. Their outstanding aspects are literary and patriotic. They are vivid, highly colored, swiftly moving tales that for beauty, pathos, and power stand alone among all the literary treasures that have come down from the past. Their underlying theme is the glory of the almost legendary kingdom of David and Solomon. It is no wonder that through successive generations they have stimulated and nourished the deeply-rooted patriotism of the people who produced them, and they will never lose the magic and the fascination of the oft-told tales that "we have heard with our ears," and that "our fathers have told us."

Chapter V

WHO WERE THE PROPHETS?

The deuteronomists concerned themselves with their nation as a political unity. They based this unity on their religion, and their conception of religion—what it involved and what it demanded—is embodied in their writings. What they might have accomplished if the Babylonians had not wrecked everything, no one knows. But it is clear that if the Deuteronomic plans had succeeded in the way their authors hoped, the little Hebrew kingdom would probably have been content to go on living its own national life in its own little Palestinian home.

After the Exile the priestly writers were in a different situation, and they moved toward a different goal. Their idea was not a political unit but a religious community. The Deuteronomists planned a nationalism; the priestly writers planned a ritualism. Both centered their hopes in their own people and their own land. The Deuteronomists made a great point of the exclusive nature of their faith. They were willing to receive outsiders, but only when they became, in a religious way, Hebrews. The priestly writers, in spite of their monotheism, were even more exclusive than the Deuteronomists, and the law which they had laid down was more elaborate and exacting than the code of Deuteronomy. Their God might be the God of the whole earth, but he was no less a Hebrew God, caring for his own people above all others, and his people's obedience to the ceremonial system was their acknowledgment of his greatness and supremacy.

The ideals of these men were high, and their plans were practical; but the racial interest was so inseparably interwoven with the religious interest that the resulting combination excluded an application or appeal to any but Hebrews. Monotheism was admirable as a theory, but it could not—or at least did not—break

down the rigid exclusiveness which was fundamental in the system. If nothing more had developed, the Hebrews would have continued with just another national religion. These men, however, able and effective as they were, were not the only creative spirits in the nation. There were others—men who had a different conception of what religion should really be, or at least of the way true religion should be expressed. These others were the prophets.

They appear in the records first in the days of Samuel and are described as being, at that time, of a rather primitive and boisterous character. Important as some of them later proved to be, the references to them at that stage are hardly full enough to trace the movement with confidence, but as time passed they increased in numbers and became an important part of the community. By the time of Elijah they were sufficiently numerous to form groups or associations. They were looked upon as professionals, in some degree as ministers are regarded today.[1] These professional prophets continue to appear as late as the days of Jeremiah, and they must have played an important part in the life of the people. They not only were generally respected, but were consulted with confidence by high and low.

As early as the time of Elijah, however, there appeared a cleavage within the group which persisted down to the days of the Exile. The cleavage was between a majority party, which stood by the powers that be and the *status quo,* and an occasional individual who, one might say, spoke out of turn. This dissenter was quite sure of himself, boldly independent and outspoken; but, being in a minority—often, as it seems, a minority of one—he was regarded by the other prophets, as well as by the people, as out of order, a troublemaker, one who should be ignored, rebuked, or suppressed. The majority was made up of those who have just been referred to as professionals, and in the popular mind they represented all prophets. The dissenters, although still called prophets, acted on their

[1] The familiarity of the expression "school of the prophets," is misleading. No such institution is mentioned in the Old Testament, and there is no indication that the prophets conducted any institution that would justify the term "school" as that term is now used.

own initiative, opposed the professionals, and sometimes even repudiated them.[2] Strangely enough, it is the words of these dissenters that are now in the books of the prophets. The words of the professional majority prophets survive only as they are occasionally quoted for purposes of refutation by the dissenters whom they opposed.

The Written Sayings

While there are sixteen books in the Old Testament called prophetic books, these are not all equally significant. Several of them would hardly be called "books" if they had been found outside the Old Testament, for they cover but a page or two. The whole dozen known as the "Minor Prophets" occupy only about a quarter of the space needed for the four greater ones—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. In the Hebrew text the contrast is less noticeable, because in the Hebrew Scriptures the book of Daniel is not included among the "Prophets." No such mechanical measurement, of course, can determine significance of content, and hardly half the number of prophets represented in the sixteen books are of outstanding importance. It is this mere handful that broke new paths not only for the Hebrew religion but for all religion.

The first of these appeared in the eighth century B.C., and included Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. Later came Jeremiah, and then still later the great prophet of the Exile, whose name is unknown but whose words are now in the latter part of the book of Isaiah. The fact that the words of these men were preserved in writing not only has extended their influence far beyond their own day, but has led to their being called the "writing" prophets. This term throws an unnecessary emphasis on the mechanical process by which the words were preserved. It is the content of their words, not the fact that the words were written down, that gives these prophets their importance. After all, the great prophets were not primarily writers but speakers. Their characteristic appeal was to "hear" the words of the Lord, not to "read" them. If later the

[2] Cf. I Kings 22:5-28; Amos 7:10-15; Jer. 23:9-32.

words were set down in writing, it was because some follower or followers felt them to be so important that they must be preserved. It is the same principle that led to the collection of the sayings of Jesus which are now found in the Gospels.

The prophetic writings have had an extended and rather complicated history. There was no obligation to limit the words on any roll to those of a single prophet. Every copy was written by hand; and the fact that parchment or papyrus was neither cheap nor plentiful was a constant invitation to adjust the prophetic sayings to fit the space available or, when space permitted, to add new sayings that might be at hand. This could be done the more easily because the sayings were usually short—not long sermons or addresses. Even when the original speeches were long only the high spots would be remembered. No attempt would be made to set down a long address verbatim. This is one reason why the words of the great prophets, and even of Jesus himself, maintain such a consistently high level of vividness and power. It was these qualities that made them memorable, and sayings lacking these qualities simply fell by the way.

The prophetic books were thus not planned nor regarded as single products of a single mind. They are collections of sayings which began with the sayings of some great prophet, but to which additions were made from time to time as new copyings made such expansion possible, until they included sayings from many other prophets than the one with whose words they began. This fact carries with it the corollary that the name standing at the head of one of these collections became in time merely a convenient label for the identification of that particular roll. It did not mean that every saying in the roll came from the first speaker.

Partly, then, to conserve space, but even more through the writers' exclusive interest in the things said, these collections of sayings lack some items that would be priceless today. If only with each saying there had been set down a notation of just who said it, when, where, and to whom, it would make no serious difference how many sayings of how many different prophets any roll contained. But the setting down of saying after saying without any hint of where one

stops and the next one begins, without any hint of a change of time, place, audience, or even speaker, leaves a reader today in confusion. For those who first wrote them down no such difficulties arose; they had all the information of this sort they wanted. But after years and generations have passed, and copy after copy has been made, present-day readers cannot help finding passages that are confusing and obscure.

This all happened naturally and with no intention on the part of collectors or copyists to create these confusions; but confusion is inevitable for one who lives two thousand years after collectors and copyists have done their work, and who lacks all those clues that to the first writers and copyists were so obvious that they never thought of writing them down. The existence of these difficulties is often overlooked because it is supposed that a biblical "book" is like a modern book as far as continuity, integrity, and authorship are concerned. This is a mistake. The books of the Old Testament, especially the books of the Prophets, are not like that. Thus, when one begins to understand the true character of these prophetic books, he realizes that to say, for instance, that some word in the book of Isaiah is not from Isaiah himself brings no discredit on the book nor on Isaiah nor on the man today who makes such a statement. The authorship of any particular word must rest on securer grounds than the accident of inclusion in a "book."

Analyzing the Prophetic Books

The process of sifting out from any book the words of the prophet named in the title begins with what is said in the book about the prophet concerned. One of the first steps is to find the point or period in Hebrew history where the prophet belongs. If the book refers to places, persons, or events that are known from other sources, the prophet's background is established. If the book gives no such information, it is left to the judgment of the student to determine as best he can, on the basis of the character and content of the sayings, the prophet's date and background. Within the book the sayings that use the first personal pronoun or that are introduced in the

prophet's name usually supply the characteristics that identify the sayings of this particular prophet. The characteristics thus discovered then serve to identify other sayings which may lack the personal pronoun or a specific introduction, one saying leading to another. When a saying concerns persons, events, or ideas belonging to another period of history, such a saying must have come from someone who belongs in that other period.

This outline of the process, though oversimplified, suggests the lines along which such a study proceeds. The results are cumulative, and the study has been carried on so long and so well that these results now throw a flood of light on many otherwise obscure pages of the prophetic books. The commentators and other special students may not always agree on certain points, but they are quite unanimous in holding that the books are composite and that without some analysis the contents are inconsistent and confusing.

A few illustrations will help to make some of these matters clear, and the book of Isaiah offers a rich supply of examples, which, however, do not differ in kind from those in other books. They show the necessity of a sifting-out process if the sayings of Isaiah are to be identified, and they also show that the collection contains sayings from dates too widely separated to fall within the lifetime of any individual. It may be observed in passing that the paragraphs in the Revised Version indicate in many cases the separate sayings of which the present collection is composed. The verses in the King James Version are of little help in this respect. The contents and contexts of the brief references that follow will show how it is that the questions raised about the prophetic books spring from the books themselves. For any adequate collection or survey of such passages one must consult a commentary or an Old Testament introduction. The few items mentioned here are merely suggestive; they are all from the first thirty-nine chapters of the book of Isaiah:

2:1 A second title hardly seems needed after the complete one at 1:1. Is this the beginning of what was once a separate collection of sayings?

2:2-4	It seems curious that this passage should be found also in Micah 4:1-4. Is it original in either place, or quoted from some source now lost? What is its relation to its context in either place?
5:25	Is this a stanza that somehow became detached from the poem in 9:8–10:4?
13:1–14:23	Babylon did not emerge as a world power until nearly a century after Isaiah's time, yet here it is referred to as having run its course and being about to fall. These two poems (13:2-22 and 14:4-21) would have been meaningless to anyone in Isaiah's day. The passage is a good illustration of the way a collection could be added to long after the days of the prophet with whose words it began.
13–23	These chapters consist of a series of "burdens." Did they originally form an independent collection of oracles on foreign nations? The relation they have to Isaiah and his times is in most cases obscure.
24–27	A picture of a world judgment. The condition of the Jews in these chapters is so utterly foreign to anything in Isaiah's day and so many of the ideas are definitely post-exilic that, like chapters 13–14, this passage illustrates the way a collection could be added to long after the days of the prophet with whose words it was begun.
28–33	A series of "woes," of which the first comes from Isaiah, but the others, like the "burdens" in 13–23 are only obscurely related to him, if at all.
34, 35	Two poems as foreign to Isaiah's day as 24–27. They have been called "a highly imaginative development of the theme given in Matthew 25:46."[8]
36–39	A passage about Isaiah taken largely from II Kings 18–20. Was this intended to close the collection of sayings which began with Isaiah?

The rest of the book (chapters 40–66) is now generally recognized

[8] C. C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 279.

as distinct and separate from chapters 1–39. Enough has been said to illustrate the composite character of the book and to show that it must be regarded as a collection of sayings to which additions were made down to a very late date. The title indicates only that the roll began with the sayings of Isaiah—not that it was intended to contain no others.

These various factors in the prophetic books combine to make them difficult and often puzzling to the modern reader. This, unfortunately, cannot be helped. The facts are what they are, and one must cope with them or frankly surrender any expectation of discovering the messages these books contain. The background of history must be recognized as part and parcel of the significance of any ancient document, including those of the Old Testament. The reverent reader accepts the situation and proceeds to do his best to understand what lies before him. He recognizes that the historic order is the divine order and that in the case of any great document—and especially a religious one—he must retrace the path of history to the point where the document appeared and then study it in the light of its own day and its own ideas. Only so can he tell whether those ideas have enduring value or whether they had value only for the time and circumstances in which they arose and to which they were meant to apply.

In carrying out this procedure his powers of attention become sharpened so that he discovers much more on the pages of the prophetic books than he had ever noticed before: differences and similarities of word and idea, changes of speaker and of audience, and many other items that were there all the time but whose significance had been quite unobserved. All this, of course, is quite commonplace to the serious Bible student, but it calls for mention here because it is so necessary if one is to read the books of the prophets for what they really are. They do not carry their meanings on the surface. One who undertakes seriously to explore them faces a task that will demand all he has to give in the way of intelligence and devotion. If he feels that lack of equipment disqualifies him from doing such work independently, he may take comfort in the fact that this

work has been done by others and that he can in large measure avail himself of the results that have already been achieved.

Prophetic Attitudes and Experiences

In speaking of these prophets the distinction applies that has already been noted—that between the professional prophets and the individual dissenters. It is the latter who are now under discussion. It is their words that are now in the Old Testament, and they are the ones who have given to the word "prophet" its glory and its fame. They worked alone. In contrast with the Deuteronomists, the priestly writers, and even the professional prophets, these men were not united in any recognized movement. Their monument is not to be found in any co-operatively produced document nor in any clear-cut organization. Each one spoke and acted strictly on his own responsibility. They "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." [4]

What this involved in the personal feelings and attitudes of the prophets can only be imagined. They would not have entered upon such solitary careers except in obedience to some inner compulsion—a compulsion that was powerful enough to sustain them against all obstacles. One would like to know more about the personal experiences that culminated in their final decisions. The sayings in their books are presented so impersonally that one forgets the speaker. This apparent self-effacement, however, is due to the reporters rather than to the prophets themselves. Because of this impersonal character of the sayings it rarely occurs to the reader to raise a question about the prophet himself or his inner experiences. Did he ever doubt his own message? Was he ever betrayed by the facts of life into a question or challenge of the divine will? Did he ever reach a point where he felt like laying down his task as all a mistake? These and similar questions usually remain unasked. In this personal sense the prophets are almost unknown. Least of all—with the sole exception of Jeremiah—is one admitted into the spiritual laboratory

[4] II Pet. 1:21 (A.R.V.).

of their souls where hope and fear, doubt and trust, realisms and ideals, are fused into an all-conquering faith.

The circumstances which led them into their respective careers can only be guessed at in the light of a few passages which report a "call." Translated into actual experience, this mystic word probably indicates a culmination in the prophet's mind of the conviction that his life must be given to the proclamation of the divine will. It must have involved on the part of the prophet a conception, or perhaps a vision, of the divine will so clear and powerful that he could imagine no alternative to the obligation to proclaim it to his contemporaries, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." [5] "Whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" [6]—"Here am I; send me." [7] The constant and determining factors in the experience were the conviction itself and the surrender to it.

One aspect of the experience that was not without its elements of spiritual tragedy was the fact that there was no objective authority to which the prophet could refer or appeal. The divine command which came to him had been heard by him alone. The bystanders heard no voice from heaven and saw no opening skies. The conviction and the obedience were the prophet's own. His authority for others could be based only on the consent his words aroused in his hearers and on his own unsupported assertion of its validity. He could only say, "Thus saith the Lord," but that was not enough. The professional prophets could—and did—say the same thing, and who, they could retort, was this dissenting individual against so many? He could only make his emphatic affirmation and let it go at that. Time alone could vindicate him, and that vindication was often delayed until the speaker had long been dead.

This acceptance of prophetic authority, the vindication of which waited on the event, was not for the prophet alone but also for his contemporaries. Just as the prophet had to rely upon his own inner conviction as supplying a sufficient authority for his proclamation, so

[5] Ezek. 2:5.
[6] Jer. 1:7.
[7] Isa. 6:8.

his hearers, and especially those who became his followers, were compelled to rely upon their own judgment regarding his authority. The means for the discovery or recognition of prophets then were no more definite or reliable than they are today. There were many men and women in the days of the prophets who lived and died not knowing that there had been a real prophet among them. Only those who heard and believed would accept the prophet's authority and become his followers. They would be a minority among the people, as their leader would be a minority among the professional prophets. The continued rebukes directed by successive prophets at the people for the same offenses show clearly that the people as a whole paid but slight attention to them. It was only a small group that accepted the prophet as one whose word was truly "the word of the Lord," and it was such groups alone that treasured up "all that the prophets have spoken." [8]

This all has its bearing on the sort of personal experiences the prophet went through. He felt compelled to say things that antagonized kings, priests, the conventional ("regular") prophets, and the people generally. He could claim no other authority than his own conviction that "the word of the Lord came to him, saying . . ." He was like Galileo saying, "But it does move," when all current ideas contradicted him. So the prophet, contradicted and opposed by all about him except a faithful few, undeterred by misunderstanding or persecution, defied the consequences to himself, and proclaimed his "Thus saith the Lord."

This is one of the ways in which he differed from the tellers of the stories and the writers of the two Bibles. The stories contained a large element of entertainment and were popularly interesting. They needed no external authorization. The writers of the two Bibles did not feel that independence. In order to give their writings the strongest endorsement they invoked the authority of the most famous leader out of the remote past and issued their works as what "the Lord had spoken unto Moses." The prophet made no appeal to popular approval nor to a remote authority but stood out boldly—

[8] Luke 24:25.

even at times defiantly—and said, "The word of the Lord came to ME, saying . . ."

This is the foundation of all that the prophets did and said, and it is central in all their thought. They touched on many themes and have been characterized in different ways; but these other matters were the fruit rather than the root of their work. The etymology of the word "prophet" reflects this idea. The word refers to one who is spokesman for another, coming from the Greek *pro*—forth, on behalf of—and *-phētēs*—speaker. When Moses would excuse himself from going to Pharaoh because he was such a poor speaker that Pharaoh would not listen to him, the Lord said, "See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."[9]

The prophet thought of himself as saying what God would say were he there; but as God is not physically audible, the prophet spoke for him. His sole purpose was to say what he believed God wanted said. The sayings often dealt with matters of national import that might call for reform or statesmanship, but these implications were not the prophet's primary concern. He was God's man and attempted nothing beyond the performance of his mission—the delivery of his message.

Prediction and Authority

Two comments are in order at this point. The first has to do with the matter of prediction. Time was—and for many still is—when it was thought the sole business of a prophet to look into the future and tell what would happen in the years to come, that is, to predict. When the early Christians explored the Old Testament hoping to find sayings that would anticipate or confirm their interpretations of Jesus, they found most of them in the books of the prophets. The prophets thus came to be regarded as having their chief function, if not their only one, in predicting the coming of Christ and other events of the distant future. This practically confined the idea of prophecy to that of prediction, and the word is now widely used in

[9] Exod. 7:1 (A.R.V.).

this sense. But one need only read these books of the prophets with ordinary care to discover that if they had included only the passages which, even on the broadest interpretation, could be applied to the Christian era, the largest part of them would be lacking. The missing parts would include all that had any pertinence to the situations of the prophet's contemporaries. If the prophet alone had been involved and if in some miraculous way he could have survived to see that his words were preserved through the centuries until they should be fulfilled, that would be one thing. It would have been quite another thing for his followers who received and kept his words. They could not be expected to have shared the prophet's glimpse into a remote future. Such ideas would have had no meaning for them. The only reason they responded to the prophetic sayings was that these related to situations which for them were present and known. And the prophet's words were preserved because they were felt to be concerned with the conditions in which he and his followers were living.

Of course the prophets did look into the future, as every thoughtful man does who reflects upon his own life or that of his people. But that future was always seen as related to, or growing out of, the immediate present; it did not lie beyond a "lost horizon." It is also true that here and there in these books are to be found some dreams or visions of utopian futures; but these are portrayed in such general, vague, and figurative terms that they permit an indefinite variety of interpretations, though they are satisfied by none. They may awaken the hopes and ideals which stirred the souls of the prophets who first dreamed them, but beyond that they cannot go, even if they were intended to. The business of the prophet, then, was not primarily to predict. His sayings were not intended to be guidebooks for a remote future.

The other comment has to do with the validity of what these prophets proclaimed. When they said, "Thus saith the Lord," they had no confirmation of their message outside themselves, nothing beyond their own conviction. Lacking any formal or objective authority, they were often challenged, contradicted, and defied by

the people to whom they spoke. When, in after years, some of their words proved to be true, it would be too late for the prophets themselves to share this vindication. Not all their sayings were thus confirmed. Even before their death they were sometimes proved mistaken. Sometimes the words of one prophet contradicted the words of another. The confirmation that could come only in a later time was essential before any particular word could prove itself valid. Later generations thus have their part in the correction or confirmation. As an early Christian writer put it, "apart from us they should not be made perfect." [10]

This means that the expression "Thus saith the Lord" must be taken as a statement of a prophet's sincere and courageous belief, but not as statement that his word was separate from himself, or that it had a miraculous origin or eternal validity. This is the way that God has "spoken unto the fathers in the prophets," and it is in this light that they are to be understood.

The People Lacked Knowledge of God

Another characteristic of these prophets is that in their thought of God and of the people's response to him they introduced an element which today many would leave out of account—the idea that knowledge is necessary and that knowledge of God underlies acceptable obedience. Apparently they felt that they knew God as he really was and that in the light of that knowledge they could not help acting and speaking as they did. This factor would today be called intellectual. The approach to God demanded knowledge. For the prophets there was one supreme object of this knowledge, and that was God himself, meaning of course *their* God—God as they believed him to be. They were so sure of him that they were convinced that they knew.

The characteristic of their teaching on this point was not a general belief in God. No literature has come down from the past that is not religious in this respect. Belief in a god or gods was common to the Hebrews as it was to all other ancient peoples. The significance of

[10] Heb. 11:40 (A.R.V.).

the prophets is to be found in their answers to the questions: What is the character of God? What does such a God mean for men? Their concern was not abstract. They were not philosophers. Their interest was in the special aspect of a God concerned with the way men behaved, not only toward himself but toward each other. It is this God whom the prophets were convinced they knew, and they wanted the people to have the same knowledge.

They were just as sure that they knew God and his will as were the Deuteronomists and the priests. But the prophetic conception of God differed not only from that of the Deuteronomists but also from that of the priests as well as from that of the professional prophets. They were sure that if the people only knew God as they themselves knew him, they would act differently. The people had got into difficulties through their wrong deeds, and their wrong deeds were consequences of their wrong ideas, so that Hosea heard the Lord saying, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."[11]

This emphasis on knowing was as novel as it was vital. The prophets were not evangelists or revivalists. They recognized the people's obedience to the current forms of religion, but the conventional religion was not producing the character and the conduct that the prophets believed God required. They did not say that the people were irreligious, nor that they did not believe in God, nor that they were disobedient to the God they knew. From the prophets' point of view the root of the trouble was that the people did not have the right idea. The need was for a teacher rather than for an evangelist. The people were not stubbornly wicked; they were blind, they did not know, and the prophet was there to teach them. As a matter of fact, it is often easier to convict a man of sin than to convict him of ignorance, and the prophets faced a difficult task. The most striking statement of their view of the knowledge of God is expressed in the vision of Jeremiah in which he dreams of a time to come when it will no longer be necessary to teach the people to

[11] Hos. 4:6; cf. 5:4.

know the Lord, "for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."[12]

The prophetic emphasis on knowledge is sometimes obscured through the use of the word "heart" in the English Bible. In current figurative use this word stands for feelings and emotions, so that a heartfelt religion or a "religion of the heart" is regarded by some as more earnest, more vital, and more valid than a form of religion which may be supposed to lack this "heart" element. The English Bible seems to confirm this view. The word is of frequent occurrence; and its contexts easily permit a careless reader to assume that when the Hebrew writer or speaker, thousands of years ago, used the word "heart" figuratively, he used it in the familiar way. This confusion is as misleading as it is unfortunate, or rather it is unfortunate because it is so misleading. According to ancient ideas the heart was regarded as the seat of understanding, of the broad practical knowledge on the basis of which man orders his conduct in daily life. And this is the biblical use of the word. The Hebrew expression "came up upon my heart" is the idiom, not for the modern "I felt," but for "it occurred to me."[13] When it is said that "Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel,"[14] what he did was to deceive them, not win their affection. When Jeremiah represents the Lord as saying, "I will give them a heart to *know*,"[15] he speaks the same idiom as Jesus, who said, "Out of the heart . . . proceed . . . *thoughts*."[16] The Hebrew usage did not grow out of any lack of words by which to express the ideas of warmth, earnestness, or emotion. Feelings and affections were supposed to have their seat in the reins or kidneys or bowels. One should compare the King James Version with the Revised Version at Jer. 11:20; 17:9-10; Phil. 1:8; 2:1. The older version gives a literal translation. In these and some other places the revisers go beyond their strict duty of translation and offer an interpretation or modernization.

[12] Jer. 31:34.
[13] Cf. Jer. 3:16; 7:31; 19:5; Acts 7:23.
[14] II Sam. 15:6.
[15] Jer. 24:7.
[16] Mark 7:21.

The God of All Nations

What did these prophets know, or believe that they knew, about God? How did their thought of God differ from the general thought of their day? The difference was both in the relation between God and the nations, including the Hebrews, and in his relation with man as man, not alone with those who were Hebrews.

The thought of the God of Israel as the national deity of the Hebrews had long been established. The new note was that the God of Israel controlled other nations as well as his own, asserting that, in a way, those other nations were his too. They did not all go so far as to say that the other nations would worship the God of Israel, though later prophets went even that far, but they said that the God of Israel was able to control those other nations.

There are two striking sayings bearing on this idea. One is Amos 9:7, where the people of Israel are bracketed with the Ethiopians, the Philistines, and the Syrians as equal objects of the control and leading of the God of Israel. What the people made of this when Amos said it can only be imagined. It could easily seem to say that their God had lost interest in them, in contradiction to the prevailing assumption that the Hebrews were his only care. If Amos was correct, then the Hebrews were no more their God's concern than foreigners, even when these might be enemies of the Hebrews. It can now be seen that what Amos meant was not that God cared no more for the Hebrews than he was supposed to care for others, but that he cared for them all as much as he did for the Hebrews. He did not care for the Hebrews less, but he cared for the others more. Theoretically this idea is today taken for granted, but practically it is assumed among the nations that the one concerned enjoys the special care of whatever gods there be, and that the others neither deserve nor receive the divine consideration the favored one so confidently claims. It is just a coincidence, but in the light of what has happened and is happening today at home and abroad, the reference to Ethiopians has a striking pertinence. One is inclined to think that if Amos were here to preach such doctrines now, there are many places where he would not be invited to speak.

The other saying is Isa. 10:5-19. Here the great empire of Assyria is pictured as "the rod of [the Lord's] anger," an instrument in God's hands which is used to punish Israel. Assyria, however, is greatly mistaken if she thinks she is invincible. When the Lord has accomplished his purpose, he will cast her aside, and nothing will save her.

These two sayings reflect two ways in which these prophets were extending the thought of God far beyond the narrow nationalisms of their day. They were making a contribution, not only to the Hebrew thought of God in days long past, but to all men's thought of God in days now present. At some points their ideas on the subject needed later correction; but these prophets were so far in advance of their own day and their ideas were in some respects so superbly true that, when seen in the perspective of what preceded them and against the background of their own time, this contribution alone would place them among the pioneers in the history of religious thought.

The work of the Deuteronomists and the priestly writers, although containing much that was of high value, tended inevitably to confine their religion to the Hebrew nation. Their influence moved in the direction of setting up narrow limits which would include only a small, selected group. In contrast to this the work of the prophets tended to expand religion so that it moved in the direction of a broadening inclusiveness. Their outlook took in all nations —not just one. They did not pursue the full implications of this principle. That could hardly be expected. But their influence tended to break down any sense of a national superiority or of a divine favoritism. In this they were in opposition to the Deuteronomists with their idea of national exclusiveness. This was one of the prophetic ideas the Deuteronomists did not accept.

The prophets associated with this idea the further idea of national responsibility. Not only must the Hebrew nation take its place among other nations, as far as the divine care was concerned; but also, if other nations were to be held responsible for what they did, so were the Hebrews. The Hebrew nation could no longer be like a spoiled

child among them, petted and favored. When Amos represented the Lord as saying, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities," [17] it is likely that he was highly approved by his hearers for the first statement, but that the second one was regarded as sheer treason. No wonder the priest of Bethel said, "The land is not able to bear all his words." [18]

But this idea of the nation's responsibility does not rest upon occasional texts. Most of what the prophets said had no point unless the nation—at least in the prophet's mind—could be held responsible for its actions. This was one of the prophetic ideas that the Deuteronomists adopted, using it as one of their basic principles.

This is the God that the prophets "knew," and with reference to the nations, including the Hebrews, the prophetic idea is clear: to the God of the prophets all nations were equally to be cared for, equally under his control, and equally responsible.

The God of Human Relations

Another prophetic idea which tended to broaden the field of religion was the place given to human relations. Here was another difference between the religious thought of the prophets and that of the people. The conventional thought of the time was that religion was essentially ceremonial in its character. This idea has much to support it. Ceremony is certainly the most widespread form in which religion finds expression, and it has already been pointed out that it is the principle that underlies the Law, that great work of the priestly writers.

For the prophets, however, religion meant to "seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge [for] the fatherless, plead for the widow." [19] When they dreamed of a "year of Jehovah's favor," it was because he had anointed them "to preach good tidings unto the meek . . . to

[17] Amos 3:2 (A.R.V.); cf. 6:2.

[18] Amos 7:10.

[19] Isa. 1:17 (A.R.V.).

bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." [20]

It is true that echoes of these ideas may be found in the Deuteronomic and priestly codes, but they are nearly submerged in the mass of ceremonial requirements, whereas in the books of the prophets the emphasis is wholly on these social behaviors. One reads the great prophets in vain for any command to perform the ritual. Indeed, if one had only the books of these prophets at hand, he would never get an idea that sacrifices should be offered, vows made, or rituals observed. The temple is mentioned, offerings and prayers are referred to, but only to be criticized or condemned.[21] No sayings are more striking nor more characteristic than some that describe this prophetic view of religion.[22]

To place the religious center of gravity in the field of human relations was more than novel; it was revolutionary, as it would be today. As the emphasis on knowledge introduced an intellectual factor into the Hebrew religion, so this emphasis on social relations introduced an ethical factor. Both factors, though always present in religion in some degree, were elevated by the prophets to positions of commanding importance.

This social emphasis has long been recognized as one of the most characteristic of the prophetic teachings. In the way the prophets presented it a whole shifting of religious perspective was involved. From the priestly point of view, religion is concerned with what a man does in acts addressed directly to deity. The priest tells what is to be done and explains how to do it; but he then steps aside, and the worshiper proceeds to the divine transaction in which only God and he are involved. This sort of religion can be carried out no matter how a worshiper feels about his neighbor. He can even go beyond inner feelings, and in outward acts do many things to his neighbor's

[20] Isa. 61:1-2 (A.R.V.).

[21] Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi do not belong with the great prophets; and Ezek. 40–48 cannot outweigh Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, nor even the preceding chapters in the book of Ezekiel itself.

[22] E.g., Amos 5:21-24; Isa. 1:11-17; Mic. 6:6-8; Jer. 7:1-11.

hurt, yet satisfy the divine requirements as these are laid down by the priest.

From the prophetic point of view, however, the only valid expression of a man's knowledge of God is his behavior toward his fellow men. This sort of religion is deeply concerned with how a man feels toward his neighbor and with anything he does that affects his neighbor, especially when that neighbor lacks money or influence so that he is helpless against the rich and powerful. The essential things are justice and fellow feeling, with the action that these normally produce.

The prophets felt no need for priest or ritual, and their view of religion was so different from that of the priests that the two were almost mutually exclusive. Even today the type of religion in which the worshiper seeks immediate contact with deity is often separated from ethics, morality, social behavior, as though these latter were distinct from the other type, which is regarded as the only real and authentic religion. This is where the prophets come in. What they did was to raise the idea of social behavior and ethical integrity to the level of religion. They saw in these things the proper expression of a deep underlying principle springing from the knowledge of God. For them religion was authentic in the degree to which it led men to act as God would act, obeying a standard of principle within himself. Access to God, from the prophet's point of view, was not a matter of ceremony and formula, as though it were an exalted type of presentation at the court of an earthly king; it depended on identity of spirit and aim, of character and behavior, on a fellowship of kindred minds. As Jeremiah said of King Josiah:

> Did not thy father eat and drink,
> And do justice and righteousness?
> Then it was well with him.
> He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
> Then it was well.
> Was not this to know me? saith Jehovah.[23]

[23] Jer. 22:15-16 (A.R.V.).

The priests would not have said anything against this, but would have regarded it as outside their field, as the priestly-minded worshiper does today.

This prophetic teaching has had a curious history. From the time of its prophetic proclamation it could not be ignored; yet, as far as organized religion is concerned, it has been treated as a poor relation, expected to sit at the table but not to preside. It has been relegated to a subordinate position. As "mere morality" it has been regarded as religiously negligible. As "good works" it has been condescendingly approved and encouraged. But in neither case has it been regarded as central or sufficient. While the church has always given ethical integrity and social helpfulness a place in the picture, she has never dared to follow the prophets in resting her case on these alone. The reason for this may have grown out of the failure to realize that the prophets never thought of these things as separate from religion. From the prophet's point of view they were as truly religious as prayers or burnt offerings—indeed, more so. God did not need, nor would he take, the offerings of bulls and goats. If he were hungry, he would not need to look to man for food. The world is his.[24] And today, as in the days of the prophets, people do not know that God is like that, or that he still desires "goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." [25] The prophetic voices still cry in the wilderness.

The Exile Interpreted

Space does not permit any discussion of the several prophets in detail. One regrets especially the necessity of passing over the person and the book of Jeremiah. But there remains one other collection of prophetic sayings that cannot be omitted. These sayings, which are found in the latter part of the book of Isaiah,[26] are anonymous, but

[24] Ps. 50:9-13.

[25] Hos. 6:6. (A.R.V.).

[26] A majority of scholars hold that this collection consists of chapters 40–55 only, and it is from these chapters that the following references are taken. But there is a significant minority opinion that sees the work of this prophet also in several of the remaining chapters of the book.

they have such similarity of style and spirit that they are generally recognized as from the same hand. The author was as much a poet as he was a prophet, and his sayings are poems. All that is known about him is in the poems themselves, and these leave so much unsaid that questions of authorship, date, and place are still under discussion. Yet there is general agreement that these sayings stand in many respects at the very peak of all that the prophets have spoken.

The beginning of the first poem is highly dramatic. From some of the other poems the situation is fairly clear. The great conquerer Cyrus is on the horizon. The Jewish captives in Babylon are thrilled with the hope that Babylon will be overthrown and that their captivity will come to an end. The poet-prophet is convinced that this hope is justified, and out of his conviction he speaks words that must have seemed to the Jewish captives like a voice from heaven:

> Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
> Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her,
> That her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned,
> That she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.[27]

The poems are not continuous, however, but deal with different aspects of recurring themes so that they constitute a kind of anthology or poem sequence. Two of these themes are highly original. The first one has to do with the idea of God. For the earlier prophets there can be no question but that they had no thought of any god but the God of Israel. But the people about them had not reached that level; they acknowledged other gods along with their own. Jeremiah had moved on to the point of denying that the other so-called gods had any real existence. But neither he nor his forerunners had reached the level of real monotheism. In their own belief these earlier prophets were, one might say, practical monotheists; but they never raised the question of monotheism as a definite doctrine. Then came the Babylonian captivity, and the question of other gods

[27] Isa. 40:1-2 (A.R.V.).

took on a new importance. Out of this background came this poet-prophet to proclaim that there is but one God and that he is the God of the whole earth.

The different aspects of the idea that he presents and his various applications of it to the experiences of the people make it clear that the idea was new and that it called for argument. It needed statement, support, and application. Ideas that have become familiar and are recognized as vital and fundamental are often associated with persons who lived long before the idea really appeared. The doctrine of monotheism is one of these. It is often projected back into early Old Testament times when it was quite unheard of; but here is where it properly belongs, and if this poet-prophet had done nothing else it would be his unique glory to have proclaimed the one and only God of the whole earth.[28]

He proclaimed this message so clearly and so convincingly that he did it once for all. It was not argued again. It has been observed that when Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. and the Hebrews were taken as captives to Babylon their loyalty to their God could not always be relied upon. The books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are full of complaints on this score. But after the Exile their fidelity to the God of Israel never came into question. The Jew came out of that experience an unswerving monotheist. From that time to the present he has been the outstanding representative of this faith, and if any single religious teacher is responsible for that transformation it must be this poet-prophet who brought the word of comfort to his fellow captives.

The other theme is, if possible, even more original than the doctrine of monotheism. It centers in the figure of the "Servant"—a figure so elusive and mysterious that his identity has baffled all expositors. And yet this figure is so powerfully drawn and is given such profound significance that the passages in which he appears give this collection a unique character. In this figure the poet-prophet has gathered up and dramatized ideas so moving, so lofty, so searching, that for religious significance the Servant stands out as the supreme figure of the whole Old Testament.

[28] Cf. Isa. 40:12-26; 43:14-21; 44:6-8; 45:11-25; etc.

The word "servant" is used frequently in these poems where the reference is explicitly to the people of Israel. But there are four passages in particular in which the Servant is portrayed as an individual,[29] and it is these passages and this portrayal that give the figure of the Servant its unique place in religious thought.

A great deal of discussion has been given to the question of his identity. It is felt that some real person and some actual experience must have been known to the prophet, so similar to what he says about the Servant that the portrait as a whole as well as in many details rests back on a basis of history. Many individuals have been proposed as the original of the picture, including the prophet himself,[30] but no identification has yet gained general acceptance. The difficulty is increased by the uncertainty whether the figure of the Servant is a person or a personification. Many regard the Servant as the personification of the Jewish people. There is nothing the prophet says of this figure that might not correspond to the experiences of the exiles. Even the death and resurrection that is suggested in chapter 53 was anticipated in Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones.[31] This view would at least escape the incongruity of supposing the term "servant" as used by the prophet to mean different things at different times, without any hint that a change of meaning has occurred.

But whether person or personification, this impressive figure now embodies the ideas of the poet-prophet from whom the portrayal came. While it is idle to suppose that one can enter into his mind and imagination at this late day, even if one could have done so then, some of the background that he himself suggests adds a touch of vitality to his word and his work. He was aflame with a grander vision of God than had ever yet captured the spirit of man. He believed that he and, through him, his people were the divinely chosen custodians of this exalted faith.[32] But not only were the people slow

[29] Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13–53:12.

[30] Cf. Acts 8:34.

[31] Ezek. 37:1-14.

[32] Isa. 41:8-16.

to grasp the import of this message; their captive condition seriously discouraged them from bearing witness for God. This situation might have wrecked a weaker faith, but this prophet rose to the challenge and saw God himself calling, encouraging, and vindicating his Servant, so that not only the Babylonian captors but all nations should see and hear "and say, It is truth."[33]

But he went further than this. His fellow captives were still about him, and their past experiences would be quite enough to account for their inability to proclaim this message. He saw the sufferings of his people as having a significance that had never been dreamed before. And then, while he was musing, the fire burned. There came to him a vision of his people as a divinely ordained servant called to carry the Lord's message to the world. In humility but with unflinching courage,[34] learning so that he might teach others,[35] opposed and persecuted yet with no spirit of revenge,[36] the Servant gave himself to his task. And the vision was crowned by the prophet's dream of the time to come when the nations would not only receive the message but would understand that what the Servant had undergone had been in their behalf, that the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of them all.[37] What the Servant had suffered that had at first seemed only punitive was now seen to be vicarious.

The people themselves would also see that their experience had a meaning which at first they had not imagined. That is, it had not occurred to them until this poet had seen it and made it clear. But now that this profound significance had been brought to light, they could look back upon their experience and be satisfied,[38] as one can be satisfied when he sees a reason for bitter experiences that had at first seemed meaningless.

This, then, was the poet-prophet's other theme. As only a poet could, he drew here an unforgettable portrait of all who have laid

[33] Isa. 42:18–43:13. This poem alone would be enough to give its author a transcendent place among all poets of the past.

[34] Isa. 42:1-4.

[35] Isa. 50:4.

[36] Isa. 50:6-7.

[37] Isa. 53:6.

[38] Isa. 53:11.

down their lives for others—all saints, prophets, patriots, and those humbler and unknown "servants" whose names, because of this service, are written in the Book of Life—and nowhere else. In this case he saw his principle exemplified in his people, whose sufferings would accrue to the advantage of all nations, accomplishing a healing and redeeming work that would vindicate them to the world and to themselves. One can easily imagine how the early Christians seized upon this principle and this portrait when they undertook to interpret to themselves and to others the true significance of Jesus, and sought an explanation of the tragedy they knew and the triumph for which they hoped.

As one looks back to these prophets and their work, he cannot but realize that they had a right to say, "Thus saith the Lord." Along with the sayings that had no application beyond their immediate occasion, these prophets saw and proclaimed principles relating to God and man that are more and more recognized as of enduring worth. In their own day they were not highly esteemed, but they spoke what they believed to be the word of God. Their own religion—and this was the religion they taught—was a religion that was basically and essentially a way of life inspired by God and expressed in ethical integrity. It lacked popular appeal and was largely ignored. But they kept the faith, scorned but not silenced. Indeed, one might take that figure of the Servant, as portrayed by the prophet of the Exile, and see in it the personification of the courageous little company of those prophets who heard the Lord speak and could not but prophesy.

> Servant of God, well done! Well hast thou fought
> The better fight, who single hast maintained
> Against revolted multitudes the cause
> Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms,
> And for the testimony of truth hast borne
> Universal reproach, far worse to bear
> Than violence.[39]

[39] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* VI, 29-35.

Chapter VI

THE SAYINGS OF THE WISE

Bible readers are familiar with the priests and prophets of the Old Testament. They are not so familiar with a third group of men known as the "wise." But in their own day these wise men were recognized as of equal importance with the priests and prophets.[1] The aspects of life with which they concerned themselves were distinct from those of priest and prophet. They did not deal with the formal ceremonies of the priest nor with the immediate demands of the prophets, but with the practical affairs of daily life and conduct. Their writings are conveniently designated as "wisdom literature." They include Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, fragments scattered through other parts of the Old Testament, some of the Psalms, and two important books in the Apocrypha—The Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus (also known as The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach).

These writings move on what might be called the human level. They suggest no nationality. Except for the fact that they now stand in the Hebrew Bible and are written in the Hebrew language, their main interests are no more Hebrew than they are Syrian or Babylonian or Egyptian or Ethiopian. One looks in vain for any special references to Israel, Jerusalem, Moses and the chosen people, or even to formal religion. The wisdom literature is human rather than national, and deals with man as man. The reader finds neither priest nor prophet. Only in rare cases are they suggested in some passing allusion. Even God himself, although his existence and power are assumed, rarely appears in the picture. When he is there at all, it is in terms of the perplexities raised in inquiring minds by the teachings of the current orthodoxy.

It is a fair question whether the presence of the wisdom writings

[1] Jer. 18:18.

among other writings that are universally recognized as religious has not tended to attach to them a religious character that is not really there. Whether they are religious or not depends upon one's view of religion. The priestly point of view differs so widely from the prophetic that a man might be religious according to one and not religious according to the other. The wise man differs from both. He believes that all that is best in life springs ultimately from the wisdom of God. He is not interested in the sacred symbols of the priests nor in the fiery words of the prophets. He has discovered that life has many problems, and he is willing to discuss them on the basis of observation and experience. He is even willing to discuss God. But his religion consists mainly in his search for the divine wisdom that will give direction to practical and thoughtful men and point the way to a wise course in matters of life and conduct. This search is for him a religious search. His religion is to seek, to find, and to obey that divine wisdom.

This wisdom moves in a different field from the knowledge with which the prophets were concerned. The prophets wanted the people to have knowledge of God. The wise men wanted the people to have knowledge of life, so that they would be able to face life as they found it, and to grapple with its problems wisely and courageously. It was the resultant acts and attitudes that constituted the wisdom of the wise. They saw many of life's problems, set them forth clearly and arrestingly, but then said in effect: "Now you will have to write your own answers. God alone knows the true ones; we can only tell you how things look to us." In matters of common behavior they could go into details and be fairly positive; but with such perplexities as those dramatized in the book of Job, or with such a universal question as what life adds up to after all, they simply showed as many sides of the question as they could, and then left it to be discussed further by any who cared to do so. It was a religion which involved a high degree of intellectual integrity, but which claimed no authority beyond what was implicit in the facts. Such a religion offers much that is sane and practical, contrasting in

this with the ceremonialism of the priest and the individualism of the prophet.

The Book of Proverbs

When one takes up these books, he finds a different world of ideas, and even a different style of writing, from those previously discussed. Small as the Hebrew nation was, it produced an impressive variety of thought and of literary styles. The book of Proverbs is the natural one to consider first. Like many other Old Testament books, it is a collection of previously independent materials. In this case the book is made up of smaller collections which can easily be identified by their separate titles. These titles are found at Prov. 1:1-6; 10:1; 22:17; 24:23; 25:1; 30:1; 31:1. There should probably be a title also before Prov. 31:10, because the poem that follows, in which the successive verses (10-31) begin with the twenty-two successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, has no connection with what precedes. So the present book of Proverbs is made up of at least eight different sections which were in all probability independent collections before they were here combined. Also, as in several other Old Testament books, the present arrangement of the several parts does not correspond to the order in which they were produced. The earliest in this case is the collection beginning at chapter 10, and the latest the one with which the book opens.

To get the characteristic flavor of the book one should begin with chapter 10, where he finds exactly what the title of the book would lead him to expect, a succession of single proverbs. Although occasionally a few of the proverbs that follow each other bear on the same subject, most of them seem to have been set down at random. They show no evidence of a planned logical order. For those who like to use single verses from the Bible the book of Proverbs is the ideal book to draw from, for the separate proverbs have no necessary connection with each other.

Even a superficial reading shows that these proverbs are concerned with aspects of character and conduct as these were seen in community life. Where did they come from? Have they a history?

Yes, they must have, and it may be sketched somewhat as follows. First, any particular situation would recur frequently enough to become typical. For instance, if it had happened only once or twice that a wise son made his father happy,[2] the incident could have passed without special notice. But when it happens over and over again, it becomes an established sequence. It can be recognized as something one may take for granted—a typical case.

But this is not enough. Some observer is needed to catch this experience and fix it securely enough to reflect upon it. Common things often go unnoticed. No one knows how many happy fathers had come and gone before some observer's mind awoke, and he said: "See that happy father? I know why he's happy: he has a wise son." So a proverb is, from one point of view, a crystallization of experience.

But further, many proverbs are not simple statements of observed fact; they carry with them a judgment or comment of the observer. For instance, when one dines at home or abroad, he may notice the plenty or the poverty of the food, or he may notice the friendly or unfriendly spirit of those who share the meal. The situation recurred so frequently that some observer caught it. But he did not stop with a factual statement; he expressed his judgment on it and formulated it in the proverb:

> Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,
> Than a fat ox and hatred therewith.[3]

It is the wise man's comment on life, and the judgment he expresses is the wisdom he would teach.

Finally, there would be the literary statement, the compact and finished form in which the proverb was eventually stated. This final form was due in part to popular repetition in which angularity of statement was smoothed down, and in part to the art of the wise man who knew how to say things in a memorable way. The proverbs

[2] Prov. 10:1.
[3] Prov. 15:17.

of the wise, then, have behind them a history of experience, observation, judgment, and literary form.

Another important characteristic of the proverb is that it deals with but a single aspect of experience. Because of this, proverbs may seem to contradict each other. One can say, "Many hands make light work," and then apparently contradict this with, "Too many cooks spoil the broth." Each proverb considers only a particular aspect of experience. It is not a general and absolute statement. There is no real contradiction—both are true. Each proverb deals with what is really a different subject. The particular application of a proverb would be preserved if it were introduced by some such phrase as "There are times when . . ." This apparent contradiction is to be found also in the biblical proverbs. For instance, not only are there times when in talking to a fool one should not descend to the fool's level of idle chatter, but there are times when in talking to a fool one might as well talk to him on his own level or he will think himself more important than he really is. This apparent contradiction appears in two proverbs that just happen to stand next to each other.[4]

These characteristics of all proverbs have their bearing on the use of biblical proverbs. They lend themselves to quotation singly, as single verses, and can be used without reference to each other. But it must be remembered that no one of them can be treated as a statement that is always and everywhere true just because it is found in the Bible. It is true for its particular application, but not otherwise. Indeed, this example of the interpretation of a proverb is only a special case in the larger field of interpretation, where it is always necessary to take into account the general character of the passage to be interpreted if one is to escape giving a passage a meaning it may not have and may never have claimed.

The large number and variety of these proverbs give them a special interest because of the way they reflect the life of their day. In them one finds himself in a small-town community with its men, women, and children; its rich and poor; its servants and masters; its lazy and industrious; its good and its bad. Here one sees the speculator who

[4] Prov. 26:4, 5.

holds his grain for higher prices,[5] the simple fellow who believes everything he hears,[6] the man who is strong through his self-control,[7] the man who conducts whispering campaigns,[8] the fellow who is so lazy he won't even lift his food to his mouth,[9] the bargain hunter who beats down the price and then boasts of how little he paid,[10] the woman who would talk you to death,[11] and many others that are hit off with the same aptness and humor. It is a wonderful portrait gallery and, if read with a little imagination, is one of the most entertaining books in the Old Testament.

These proverbs make up the bulk of the book, but the opening chapters are different. They contain a number of brief addresses to "my son." These, like the proverbs, deal with wise conduct, but they are more extended and run into little homilies or sermonettes. The most striking and impressive passage in this opening section, however, is the poem in praise of wisdom in chapter 8. If one would know how the wise felt about the wisdom they sought and served, he should read this poem. It is a rapturous description of wisdom's place and function in the life of the world.

The particular wise man who indited this poem was a poet whose heart was aflame with devotion to the divine wisdom. In these exalted lines he was able to suggest both his own ardor and the glory of its object. He began with controlled enthusiasm as though he were planning a glowing but restrained description of wisdom. But after a few lines he threw aside restraint, daringly personified his subject, and from this point to the close let Wisdom describe herself. He knew her to be all that she here asserts herself to be, but he wanted her to say it herself. As the priest had said, "Thus spake Moses," as the prophet had said, "Thus saith the Lord," this wise man says, "Thus speaks Wisdom."

[5] Prov. 11:26.
[6] Prov. 14:15.
[7] Prov. 16:32.
[8] Prov. 18:8.
[9] Prov. 19:24.
[10] Prov. 20:14.
[11] Prov. 21:9.

And what did he see in Wisdom? He saw in her the source of all sound knowledge; he saw her to be the guide of those who rule, the giver of life's most precious rewards, even the Lord's "master workman" when the world was being made; and, to crown it all, he saw her as one who loves mankind. This is what Wisdom meant to him. What could he say more? Back of such a poem lies not only a poetic spirit but a conception of wisdom that helps to explain why the counsel of the wise should stand alongside the law of the priest and the word of the prophet.[12]

The Book of Job

Sometime between the earliest and latest dates represented in the book of Proverbs there appeared a work that has long been acknowledged to be among the greatest documents of the past—the book of Job. As some lofty mountain peak challenges successive generations of climbers, so a work of this sort challenges successive generations of students. And it will continue to do so, partly because of the greatness of the book and partly because of its difficulties. Whether it is regarded as having a closely knit continuity or whether it is regarded as a compilation that grew by successive stages, the book should have a table of contents to start with. Such a table would run somewhat as follows, with an opening statement that the book is in poetry throughout except at its beginning and its close:

1–2; 42:7-17	Prose narrative telling of Job's trial and restoration.
3–27	Dialogues between Job and three "friends" in which Job demands an explanation for his sufferings.
28	A poem in praise of wisdom.
29–31	A monologue in which Job reaffirms his integrity.
32–37	A monologue in which Elihu rebukes Job as the "friends" had done.
38:1–42:6	The voice of the Lord challenging Job to explain the wonders of nature.

[12] Jer. 18:18.

Until these divisions have been noted one is hardly ready for any serious consideration of the book. They are there, whatever be one's conception of the book as a whole. The table, however, is oversimplified because these divisions, though clearly indicated in the book, are not homogeneous within themselves; each one requires its own analysis before its character and content are wholly clear.

Before discussing the single features of the book it is important to emphasize the fact that the whole book is a highly wrought work of literary art. It is not a transcript of the minutes of a meeting. It is not an attempt to set down a painfully exact record of historical words and events. It lacks the informality of the one and the prosaic character of the other. Whoever the original Job may have been, whatever may have happened to him, that story is not the main business of this book. Here the person and experiences of Job serve simply to give a local habitation and a name to ideas which these prose narratives and dramatic poems so powerfully present.

The scenes in heaven with which the book opens, and the divine speeches that come at the close, are obviously not matters of historic record; neither are the other scenes and speeches which make up the book. It is a tribute to the book's dramatic power that its hero Job is so often discussed as one would discuss a character in history, for the book is not a history. It is a great literary work in which Job is simply the central character. Deeper than history are those experiences in the soul of man in which he hopes and fears, doubts and struggles; and it is these that this book portrays, whoever the historic Job may have been.

The prose story[13] presents Job in the character in which he is probably best known, the Job whose patience has long been proverbial.[14] He is described as a man of great wealth, of the highest reputation, and above all of exemplary piety. No one could be more diligent than he in his attention to all religious duties. This devotion is not fitful

[13] Job 1:1–2:10; 42:10-17. The three friends do not belong in this story, neither do the words "when he prayed for his friends" (42:10*b*), which were added in order to connect the close of the prose story with the dialogues.

[14] Jas. 5:11.

—it is Job's daily program. Then the scene changes from earth to heaven, where the Lord is having a conference with his messengers, the "sons of God." Among them is Satan. The Lord feels such satisfaction in Job's piety that he thinks Satan must have noticed such a perfect saint. Satan has, but he is not as sure of Job's piety as the Lord seems to be. He throws out the fateful question, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" and in this question he strikes the keynote of the story. The Lord is so sure of Job that he makes no attempt to settle the question by argument; he will submit it to a demonstration. Satan is given permission to put Job to the test with the single reservation that Job's life be spared.

It should be noted in passing that there is no suggestion of the "reward in heaven" idea which is so familiar today. All has to be worked out within the bounds of earthly life. Job must survive if his piety is to be vindicated. If he should die under the strain the question would remain unanswered. So Satan proceeds with his test. His first trial fails. He tries a second time and fails again. The test stops there. To go further might kill Job. But the test has gone far enough to vindicate both the Lord's confidence and Job's steadfastness. Nothing remains but that Job be restored to health and prosperity, and the second part of the story tells that this was done.

The story is told so perfectly and so objectively that at first the reader thinks only of Job and his fate. Not till later does he realize that the story is based on an idea rather than on a history. Its compactness and symmetry are the products of literary art, not because it was written primarily as a literary undertaking, but because the writer was master of an art perfectly adapted to his purpose. The story is complete in itself. It shows that Job's loyalty was invincible. To the question, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" it answers triumphantly, "Yes, he does." It gives this answer although Job has not the faintest idea as to why all this affliction has come to him, and although he knows nothing of what has been going on between the Lord and Satan. He simply suffers in silence and in so doing settles the heavenly argument.

It is a story that would satisfy many minds—many, but not all.

Any such experience as that which it describes must have involved more than appears. It was too simple—that is, too simple for some who found themselves outraged by that scene in heaven, and who knew, perhaps from personal experience, that bitter suffering comes to men, to good men, without any apparent rhyme or reason. If that scene in heaven was intended to throw the responsibility on Satan, it defeated itself. Can one believe that the Lord is so callous toward human suffering that he can treat men as pawns in a game with Satan? And has the victim no rights in the case? Is a man in such a situation supposed to be so stupid, so apathetic, that he has nothing to say for himself? May he not even complain? Is he supposed to be faithful to a deity who neither enlightens nor defends those who trust him? Such questions, as soon as they are asked, are seen to reach out into the lives of all men—that is, of all men who reflect on life and its meanings as did the wise men of ancient Israel. And one of them, the most daring and dramatic of them all, set himself to show the other, the human, side of such a situation. He did this in the dialogues between Job and the friends that constitute the most original part of this original book. In them he gave his conception of what might have gone on in the mind of one who, like the Job of the prose story, was afflicted without any knowledge of the reason for what had happened to him, but who was too alert intellectually to accept his fate without question.

The whole division[15] includes more than half the book and is inserted immediately after the first part of the prose story. A note in prose introduces three friends, who arrive at the point in the story where Job may be supposed to be suffering the full impact of his afflictions. With Oriental courtesy they wait for him to speak. Job's first words are a bitter lament that he should have lived at all. It is a long and moving cry that may well have been suggested by the similar but more spontaneous lament of Jeremiah.[16] With chapter 4 the dialogue proper begins. Eliphaz is the first to offer comment and advice. As each of the three friends speaks in turn, Job replies to

[15] Job 2:11-13; 3–27; 29–31; 42:7-9.
[16] Jer. 20:14-18.

each, so that there is built up a cycle of six speeches. There are three such cycles—or at least such seems to have been the intention, but it was not completed; something has happened to Bildad's last speech and Job's reply to it, while there is no final speech at all for Zophar.[17] The probability that the dialogue was intended to close with a third cycle is indicated not only by the existence of the beginning of such a cycle, but also by the presence of the poem on wisdom which follows immediately,[18] and which has nothing to do with the theme of the preceding dialogue. It stands across the path in a way to indicate that whatever had preceded had now come to its close.

Various rearrangements of the closing chapters[19] have been proposed. They may be found in commentaries and elsewhere. But the general purport of the whole series of poems is not seriously obscured by the incompleteness of the close.

Throughout these long dialogues the speeches of Job portray one of the most moving characters in all literature. He is the victim of afflictions for which he can see no explanation. His previous belief in God carried with it a confidence in God's goodness that would make impossible such afflictions when they were not deserved. Job is sure that they are sent, or at least permitted, by God, but he is so sure of his own integrity that he is convinced his sufferings are unjust. "What sort of God is this?" he asks. And the more he tries to think it out, the more the problem concentrates on God. Job has lost the God in whom he believed and feels himself left "having no hope, and without God in the world."

The friends do not help him. On the contrary, they ring the changes on the idea which Job finds so desolating, and which at first Job himself shared—that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. On this basis the friends hold Job to be guilty. They do not know of what, but they are sure there must be something, and they urge him to confess and to repent so that he can be restored. Job accepts that basis as a general principle—or did

[17] Job 25–27.

[18] Job 28.

[19] Job 25–27.

until his present predicament—but his conviction that he has done nothing to deserve punishment sets the whole matter in a different light. The religious teachings which he had inherited, and had held up to that time, have failed him now. He has searched his heart in vain. There must be a flaw in the argument somewhere. Does the principle leave no room for exceptions? Is God compelled to be unjust sometimes? Must Job choose between the personal integrity of which he is so sure and the God of whom now he is not sure at all? If only he could meet God face to face and talk it over, there might be a way out. But no, he knows that to be impossible. For himself, he will hold fast his integrity; but as for God—"Oh that I knew where I might find him!" [20]

The prose story had not dealt with this situation. The question of what might have gone on in the mind of such a sufferer had not been raised. By ignoring it the story could answer the question, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" with a conventional satisfying "Yes." But the dialogue vigorously answers "No." There is something owing to the sufferer which, if God be just, the sufferer has a right to demand, namely, a reason for his trouble. He has a right to ask, "Why?" The problem is thus lifted from the physical plane to that of the spirit, but this only makes the solution more imperative and more difficult. Satan's question becomes a ghastly joke when confronted with Job's bitter challenge, and Job's own question is one to which neither God nor Satan replies.

How does the story end? It does not. The wise man who wrote the dialogues saw the problem but did not know the answer. In spite of this failure, however, he carried it far beyond the point reached in the prose story. He claimed for man the right to question and to protest—to examine the adequacy and validity of teachings about God which had been handed down to him from the past, and to protest against them when they failed. Such an undertaking is not without its perils. Not only does the questioner jeopardize his own personal peace of mind; but his friends and neighbors, quite unable to enter into his inner struggles, can only condemn

[20] Job 23:3.

him for taking a position that seems to them so defiant, so unjustified, and, in a word, so unorthodox. The wise man who here described this experience so vividly must have had some reason for dealing with such a subject. One might almost suppose the problem to have arisen out of his own experience. But whether the struggle and protest were his own, whether the subject was simply one which he felt called for discussion, or whether both factors were involved, his work had two significant results: (1) he poured into his poems a pathos so moving that the world still listens to his tragic lines—his hero has become a world hero; (2) he showed that the doctrine of retribution, as that had been received ever since the days of Deuteronomy, failed to meet some of the most searching problems it was supposed to solve.

It must be quite clear that the representations of Job in the prose story and in the dialogues differ widely from each other—as widely as prose from poetry. The most important difference is between the uncomplaining sufferer of the prose story and the desperate soul of the dialogues who refuses to accept his afflictions and dares to challenge the Almighty in his own defense. There are other differences, but this is the most important one. It is so marked that many expositors find it impossible to consider two such conflicting characters as being represented in the same individual, and regard it as highly probable that the prose story and the dialogues came from different authors.

The poem in praise of wisdom which stands at this point[21] is similar to the one in Proverbs 8. One can only speculate upon the reason for its presence here. Perhaps some editor felt that wisdom would have solved the perplexities of Job as these had been presented in the dialogues and so, as the dialogues seemed incomplete, offered this as a suitable conclusion.

But the discussion centering in Job was not closed. The dialogues had dramatized Job's rebellion against what seemed to be the divine injustice. They had said nothing in confirmation of Job's claim that he did not deserve such punishment. There was a place for a more

[21] Job 28.

complete picture of Job himself, a sketch of his personal character, and this is given in the next three chapters.[22] In these chapters Job in turn mourns the loss of his former prosperity, reflects bitterly upon his degradation, and then in more formal fashion takes his oath that he has lived before the world as an upright man should live.

If it were not that the poem on wisdom breaks into the sequence, this long—the longest—speech of Job's might be regarded as a formal close to the dialogues, serving to balance the lament with which the dialogues are introduced. But the incompleteness of the third cycle of speeches and the intrusion of chapter 28, along with the questions raised by the speech itself, have led some to regard it as coming from someone other than the poet of the dialogues—one who wanted to fill out the picture the dialogues had given. Whether it belongs to the preceding dialogues or not, or whether it came from the same author or not, it is one of the high points not only of the book of Job but of the Old Testament.

It portrays Job, not as the uncomplaining sufferer of the prose story nor as the fiery rebel of the dialogues, but as an embodiment of the Old Testament's finest standards of personal character. As Job is here described, his virtues belong in a category quite different from that of the virtues ascribed to him in the prose story. There his excellence is seen in the diligence with which he obeys all the requirements of formal religion, specifically in the presentation of all proper offerings. Here he is a man who scorns falsehood, who is just to his servants, who provides food and clothing for the widow and the fatherless, is hospitable to travelers, does not trust in wealth, does not rejoice when his enemy suffers—in a word, an embodiment of the ethical ideals of the prophets. Each of the three portrayals, the prose story, the dialogues, and this one, emphasizes its own ideal and omits the slightest allusion to the other. The question is not concerning the possibility of their combination in a historical character, for history is not the purpose here, but rather the distinction between the representations of different writers. For the author

[22] Job 29–31.

of the prose story Job is the ideal servant of the ritual. For the author of the dialogues he is the challenger of traditional orthodoxy. For the poet of chapter 31 he is the prophetic ideal of personal character.

Chapter 31 then closes with the statement, "The words of Job are ended." This is surprising in view of how much more of the book is yet to come. It is another indication that the book of Job is not now in its original form and that the present book is a compilation of material inspired by the challenge thrown out in the dialogues. An earlier form of the book may have ended here, and if so this would be a suitable place for the isolated paragraph, Job 42: 7-9,[23] which, though it evidently is intended as a closing statement, closes nothing in its present location. Here the long speech of Job has brought the dialogues to a formal close. The friends make no reply, nor do they appear again; so this brief paragraph would make a fitting close for a book which had ended with the words of Job.

The next division of the book[24] introduces a speaker, Elihu, who has not appeared in the book before, and who does not appear after his speech is finished. He stands isolated and alone. The speech reviews much of the ground already covered by the friends. It enters abruptly, and when it is finished it is followed by the words of the Lord, addressed not to Elihu but to Job, who has not spoken since the close of chapter 31. So there seems to be no real place here for this speech either in its content or in its context. It constitutes an independent composition which was included in the book of Job simply because it dealt with Job and was felt by the compiler of the book to deserve a place in his collection. Evidently he did not know just where to place it, and he did not get it very happily located. But it was at hand, and he put it in, even if it did not have an important or original contribution to make.

With chapter 38 Job reappears, this time to be addressed by the Lord himself. There are some exalted descriptions of nature in

[23] Omitting the words "after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job," which were added later, after the inclusion in the book of the speeches of the Lord in chapters 38–41.

[24] Job 32–37.

the Old Testament, as for instance Gen. 1 and Psalm 104, but nothing to compare with Job 38–39. Here speaks one who was a poet by the grace of God. He sings of earth and sea and sky. He sees the wild creatures that roam the mountains or fly in the air. And he says of them all that God made them, keeps them, directs them. God's power and glory as seen in his creation has stirred his wonder, his humility, and his praise. Everywhere he sees God. How blind the eye that does not see him! How deaf the ear that does not hear his voice! With true dramatic instinct the whole glorious panorama is brought before the mind, not in plain declarative sentences, but in questions whose answers only intensify the soul's sense of the greatness of God. The kindred poems in chapters 40–41 are only less exalted than the ones that precede them, but the theme is the same—the insignificance of man in contrast with the works and the ways of God.

These are often referred to as nature poems, and that is what they are; but their presence here raises a question which, while it does not touch the splendor of the poems, bears on the place they have in the book of Job. All that is so gloriously displayed in these nature poems was practically admitted by the Job of the dialogues. His difficulty lay in quite another field. It was the greatness and inaccessibility of God that prevented any issue to the struggle that was breaking his heart. To underline that greatness was only to make his situation more hopeless. To strike him dumb with awe, in the presence of the greatness he never questioned, hardly meets the case. Not "Is God great?" but "Is God just?" was the tragic question of the Job of the dialogues, and to this question these poems, wonderful as they are, give no answer.

The whole passage[25] shows some perplexing duplications. Twice[26] the Lord speaks out of the whirlwind. Twice[27] counsel is darkened by words without knowledge. Three times[28] the Lord "demands"

[25] Job 38:1–42:6.
[26] Job 38:1; 40:6.
[27] Job 38:2; 42:3.
[28] Job 38:3; 40:7; 42:4.

a reply. Twice Job is reduced to speechless humiliation. It is not clear how or why such similar scenes should follow each other so closely. Various reconstructions have been proposed, from rearrangements of the present material to heroic literary surgery which amputates parts that are felt to be superfluous. The variety of the proposals, although they have failed so far to solve the problem, makes it clear that the problem exists and that something has happened to the text.

All this only confirms what has already appeared more than once —that the book of Job consists of writings which, though now brought together in a single book, show the marks—one might almost say the scars—of the process by which they were united. In addition to these major matters, there are numerous editorial touches throughout the book. Most of these are easily noticed as soon as the book is studied with any care. There are also words and lines whose obscurities cannot always be cleared up.

The most famous of these is, of course, the passage beginning, "I know that my redeemer liveth."[29] The root of the difficulty in any attempt to discover just what the author meant here lies in the Hebrew words themselves. They cannot be translated with certainty. The marginal readings in the English translations give some suggestion of the difficulty. It may fairly be questioned whether the translators did not permit their Christian ideas to influence them in their choice of the word "redeemer" in their translation. And even if they judged this to be the best word, the editors of the Revised Version certainly should not have spelled it with a capital *R,* for by so doing they imposed on a common Hebrew word a particular Christian sense which it wholly lacked.

These and many similar matters belong in the field of detailed studies. The present purpose is rather to suggest a general outline of the book in its main features. The parts that are outstanding are: the prose story; the dialogues, including Job's long closing speech; and the nature poems. Subordinate to these are the poem

[29] Job 19:25-27.

on wisdom[30] and the speech of Elihu.[31] When the three main features are recognized, one discovers that the figure of Job is given a different character in each: (1) he is the submissive, uncomplaining sufferer who accepts all his afflictions without a murmur; (2) he is the rebellious soul who refuses to accept his afflictions and is loud in his protests against sufferings which he regards as wholly unjust; and (3) he is the insignificant mortal who is overwhelmed by the immeasurable and all-pervading power of the deity upon whom he has dared to call.

These aspects of the central figure are so different from each other that the parts of the book in which they are found are believed by many to have come from different sources and authors. If this is the case, it would indicate the following literary history. First of all, there was a folktale, perhaps a very ancient one, about a righteous Job upon whom many calamities fell. This folktale was taken up, retold, and its present perfect form given its place as the prose story now in the book. The experience of Job as told in this story raised religious questions which could not be evaded by the thinkers, the wise men, of Israel. Those questions were persistently discussed. Out of those discussions, by-products of which were the wisdom poem and the Elihu speech, there came the two great mountain peaks—the dialogues and the nature poems; one a protest against God's seeming injustice, and the other an acknowledgment of God's unapproachable power and wisdom. Under the general title of "Job" this material was brought together in the present book.

This was not accomplished with perfect success, for some parts are incomplete and in some places the seams still show. What other material there may have been is now beyond discovery, but there must have been more than this. One may well believe, however, that this book contains the richest harvest of all that sowing. It is assigned to the literature of the wise, not because all the wise men were gifted storytellers or superb poets, but because it deals with the affairs of life and experience in a way that seeks to under-

[30] Job 28.

[31] Job 32–37.

stand their place and significance in human history. The wise men sought life's meanings and values, and they were undeterred from this search by any fear that they would fail to reach final answers to their questions. This book has preserved their treatment of some of the problems raised by the story of Job.

The Book of Ecclesiastes

The questions raised by the story of Job were by no means the only ones that challenged thoughtful minds in Israel. Even more profound was the question raised in a shorter and less famous book entitled Ecclesiastes. With the same keen observation already noted in connection with the book of Proverbs the wise man who speaks here looks on life. But he does not present his observations in order to build up types of character to praise or condemn. He notes the many things men do, and have to do, as they engage in work and play. He sees that the same things happen over and over again to generation after generation. And as he considers the moving picture of human life, he asks, in effect, "What is the use of it all? What does it all add up to?" To this question he gives the appalling answer, "It adds up to precisely zero; there is no enduring value in anything." This question and answer go beyond anything in Job.

It seems almost incredible that such a book should ever have been included in the Old Testament, but there it is, and it is much too significant to be overlooked. The subtitle of the book, "The Preacher," is less obscure than "Ecclesiastes." It is the title given the author in the body of the book.[32] The word "Ecclesiastes," based on the word *ecclesia,* assembly or church, refers to one who speaks in an *ecclesia,* hence a preacher. The author, however, evidently intends his book to be regarded as having come from Solomon, although the name Solomon is not used.[33] It might be remarked in passing that the picture of Solomon preaching to a Hebrew congregation seems rather remote from the general con-

[32] Eccles. 1:1, 12; 7:27; 12:8-10.

[33] Cf. Eccles. 1:1, 12; 2:4-10.

ception of him, but it harmonizes with the way he was traditionally regarded, as the great patron of wisdom.[34]

The book is a miscellany of sayings about life and how to make the best of it—of course from the author's point of view. The sayings are not set down in any order, but though the topics are various the prevailing spirit is the same. This spirit is frequently described as cynical or pessimistic. It partakes of both. Many today would call it realistic. But however it be labeled, it is a spirit that is widespread today. It is characteristic of those who live in the present moment and look no further. The author advises that this spirit be kept under control, for the obvious reason that unbridled license wrecks itself. It might be called a spirit of enlightened self-interest—enjoy life but do not run wild.

This is the spirit of the original, or one might say basic, book; but, like nearly all other books in the Old Testament, it has been edited and expanded before reaching its present form. All students of the book have found in it contradictory ideas. One of the most striking of these is the reference to the judgment which, presumably, does not occur till after death;[35] whereas the prevailing idea of the book is that for both man and beast death is the end.[36]

Another characteristic of the book is that in a number of places one of the author's characteristic statements is immediately followed by one that seems intended to correct it. For instance, when he says that wickedness is found where justice and righteousness should be,[37] there follows immediately: "I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked" [38]—as though some reader added a note designed to blunt the edge of the preceding observation. Another example is the author's advice to young men to enjoy themselves while they are young, which statement is immediately fol-

[34] I Kings 4:29-34; Prov. 1:1-6.

[35] Eccles. 3:17; 11:9; 12:14.

[36] Eccles. 3:19; 9:5, 6, 10.

[37] Eccles. 3:16.

[38] Eccles. 3:17. (A.R.V.).

lowed by the admonition that for all these things men would be brought to judgment.[39]

Such occurrences are numerous enough to lead to an interesting supposition regarding the inclusion of this book in the Old Testament. The supposition is that: (1) the original book, ascribed as it was to the great King Solomon, was too well-known to be omitted from the collection of Hebrew Scriptures; (2) its point of view was so pessimistic or even antireligious that its inclusion was seriously opposed; so (3) in order to disarm the opposition, brief statements were added here and there that would give the book a more orthodox flavor. If this is what happened, it would account for these interesting but incongruous sayings that constitute one of the book's characteristics. Whatever its origin and history, the book contains so many daring expressions of disillusionment that it might almost be taken as a sort of antidote to a religion that goes as far astray in the direction of sentimentality and wishful thinking as this book does in the direction of cynicism and self-interest.

Religion Needs "Wisdom"

The wisdom literature of the Old Testament consists mainly of the three books that have just been described. Belonging also to this literature are some Psalms, which will be referred to later, and also a number of fragments scattered here and there through the other books. But there is nothing characteristic or typical that these three books do not contain. The literature falls roughly into two categories: (1) advices concerning character and conduct; and (2) discussion of man's place and significance in God's world.

The problems that arise in the second category call for observation, judgment, imagination. They demand the exercise of intellectual and speculative ability. They constitute a field whose exploration and cultivation need the guidance of that Wisdom who calls to all men everywhere, but who can reward only those who respond to her voice, who take her yoke upon them and learn of her.

[39] Eccles. 11:9.

This is an aspect of religion too often overlooked. To be vital and effective, religion must be based on ideas that have been thought out. This was true in times past, and it is true today. All so-called plans of salvation, all interpretations of prophecies and apocalypses, are evidences and products of thought and imagination. No matter how unquestioningly a devout believer may accept and proclaim them, no matter how vigorously the same believer may denounce philosophies and theologies, scholars and scholarship, studies and education—back of the plans and interpretations he so resolutely holds stands someone who took the idea God gave him and then, as a result of thought and meditation, molded it into a form or formula that the devout believer could receive and recite. The believer's ignorance of this process is his misfortune, but it has no bearing on the fact. It is the wise men who have given believers the formularies, creeds, and doctrines in which they believe.

In their search for truth the wise men often went out, as was said of Abraham, "not knowing whither he went." Their work called for courage and daring. They were not always successful in their search, but they would blaze a trail even if they did not reach their goal. They were ready to accept the challenge which often arose when experience confronted tradition, and to reason out as well as they could a solution of the problems that were as new as they were perplexing. In this they were but exercising that wisdom which the Lord had given. They were more universal than the priests and more practical than the prophets. Each group made its own characteristic contribution, and all three are essential in the basic structure of religion.

Chapter VII

A TEMPLE HYMNAL

In the Hebrew Bible the books are arranged in three divisions. The first division includes the Law, known to Christian readers as the Pentateuch. The second division is called the "Prophets." It includes the so-called historical books (except Ruth, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther) and the prophetic books (except Daniel). The third division includes all the rest, and is called simply the "Writings." In this third division the book of Psalms stands first. A psalm, in this connection, may be described as a religious poem set to music, similar in a general way to the modern hymn. This definition of a psalm is not wholly satisfactory, and it applies rather loosely to some of the poems in the collection; but it indicates the two main external features of the psalms: that they are poems, and that in many cases they were intended to be sung. The book of Psalms—or the Psalter, as it is often called—is a collection of 150 such poems. They are not successive chapters such as appear in other biblical books, but separate poems which have no necessary continuity.

In consequence of their lack of order many attempts have been made to classify them. All these attempts are valuable in so far as they call attention to different aspects of the individual psalms, but the fact that so many different classifications have been made shows that final success has not been reached. No such attempt will be made here. The purpose will be rather to select psalms which by their content and their variety may suggest how rich a field the book of Psalms offers to those who wish to explore it. Although such a large number of poems is involved, and although so many differences appear among them, there are some general aspects of the poems and of the collection that should be dealt with before individual psalms are discussed.

It should be clear that the work of the writers was one thing and the work of the collectors was quite another. The poems were not written as abstract exercises in composition nor as contributions to a collection that was to be made at some future time. They were written for their several purposes and occasions, and there the work of the writers ended. The book of Psalms was not the only collection to be made, but it was the latest and the largest. There were a number of earlier collections. One of them "the book of Jashar," which is quoted in Josh. 10:12-13, contained not only the poem quoted there but also David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan.[1] Another one, "the book of the Wars of Jehovah," is quoted in Num. 21:14. Either one of these may have contained such psalms as Exod. 15:1-18 and I Sam. 2:1-10, which were not included in the later collection.

Different Collections of Psalms

These two collections are definitely named, but within the Psalter itself there are groups of psalms which seem to have existed as independent collections before they were incorporated in the large and final book of Psalms. They are indicated as distinct groups by their titles.[2] The largest of these "psalters within the Psalter," is the group using the title "Psalm of David." There are seventy-three of them,[3] nearly half the Psalter—so many that more than one original collection may be represented. There is a group of eleven with the title "Sons of Korah"; a group of twelve with the title "Psalm of Asaph"; a group of fifteen with the title "Song of Ascents"; and a

[1] II Sam. 1:18.

[2] The way titles are printed in English Bibles can be misleading. The proper titles are the Hebrew ones which belong to the Hebrew psalms, and which appear in the Hebrew text. All the English versions give these in their proper places. But some English editions add titles of their own, not only to psalms which already have original Hebrew titles (e.g., Pss. 32; 92), but also to those which in the Hebrew text have no title (e.g., Pss. 33; 93). As soon as one notices the different types used in printing the added English titles, he can easily identify the ones that belong in the original Hebrew text and those supplied by the editors of the English versions.

[3] This is the number in the Hebrew text and in the Protestant versions. The ancient Greek version known as the Septuagint (LXX), which was made sometime before the Christian era, has eighty-three "David" titles, and differs in some other respects from the Hebrew. It has been followed in the Roman Catholic versions.

group of fifteen that begin or end with the word "Hallelujah" and are known as the "Hallelujah Psalms." It should be noted, however, that the evidence of the titles goes no further than to show that the psalms to which they are prefixed were once regarded as belonging to the same collection; they cannot be relied upon as indications of authorship. Good illustrations may be seen in some of the psalms entitled "of David." Psalms could hardly have come from him that imply the existence of the temple.[4] Neither does it seem probable that he would have written words in which the people should address him or describe him, as in Psalms 20 and 21. There are other psalms for which this and other titles are equally incongruous, so that, while the titles must always be taken into account, they cannot outweigh the direct statements in the psalms when title and contents do not agree. At best the titles can be regarded only as representing the views of the editors and collectors, which may or may not have been correct because their work came so long after the time most of the psalms were written.

The number of titles which contain musical directions of some kind indicates that the psalms bearing these titles were used for liturgical purposes. But these were not the only ones so used. Chapter 16 of First Chronicles shows how psalms were used, and actually quotes the ones used on this occasion.[5] The ones quoted have no titles, showing that psalms without musical directions were also used liturgically. This and other facts confirm the conclusion that the Psalter is a collection of poems, many of which—perhaps most of them—were sung as hymns and anthems are sung in religious services today. A further indication of such use appears in the refrains which, in so many psalms, point toward a responsive use.[6]

Psalms and Hymns

A few other characteristics of the psalms may be made clearer by comparison with modern hymns. The chief external difference

[4] Pss. 5:7; 27:4; 65:4; 68:29.
[5] Pss. 105:1-15; 96; 106:1, 47-48.
[6] E.g., Pss. 42–43, 46, 107, 136.

is that in current hymnals the author is usually named and his date given. If this information were lacking, it would be difficult to tell, except in a most general way, what the date, occasion, or background of any particular hymn might be; and it is this kind of information that the psalms lack. Hymns as a rule do not contain names or dates that indicate their connection with any particular situation. They deal with feelings and ideas which may be placed in a not-too-narrowly limited period of history, but beyond that they usually offer nothing definite in the way of date or authorship. This information must be found elsewhere, and it is the same way with the psalms. There are some that evidently belong in the temple. There are others that apparently relate to special occasions, but they give no clue to the particular persons or dates for which they were written. As would be the case with anonymous hymns, one can judge only in a general way from the contents of the psalm what its original date and setting may have been.

Psalms may further be compared with hymns in that some are congregational and intended for collective use, as is indicated by their plural pronouns as well as by their general character. Others use the singular pronouns and express the feelings and ideas of an individual. As with hymns, so with psalms, it easily happens that a poem written originally from an individual point of view, and even using the singular pronoun, might be used collectively by a congregation. "My country, 'tis of thee," is a good example of the way a singular form may be used in a plural sense. Some of the individual psalms, however, would hardly be suitable even for this adapted use, and their presence in the Psalter must be due to the desire to preserve them for their own sake.

This leads to the further observation that, whether the psalms were intended originally in an individual or a collective sense, they were also like hymns in having been written in the first place by some individual. It was an individual who expressed in his psalm his own feelings and ideas, whether they had to do with his personal situation or represented his sense of what was fitting for a collective use. Real men were back of these psalms; and the appreciation of

them depends in large measure on one's success in recovering the spirit and earnestness that moved these men in their writing.

This does not mean that everything said in the psalms would harmonize with the Christian thought that was yet to come, or with facts about the external world that the psalmists did not know. They lived in their own world and can be understood only when they are viewed in terms of the world in which they believed themselves to be living—not only the outer world of earth and air, of sea and sky, but also the inner world of ideas about God and man.

These men were mature, earnest, and wholly sincere in their devotion to their God and their religion. The variety of experiences and situations reflected in their psalms makes it possible for almost anyone to find among them something that strikes a responsive chord. So in spite of their place in an ancient—and in many ways a vanished—world, the psalms speak *to* the hearts of men because they came *from* the hearts of men.

The Psalter and the Law

The Psalter has been called the "Hymnbook of the Second Temple," and though some of the psalms would hardly suit this purpose, the title would be applicable to most of them. The relation between the Psalter and all the temple stood for is, however, closer than this. Back of the temple was the Law—the Law which had been formulated first in the Deuteronomic and then in the Priests' Bible; the Law which, by the time the Psalter was compiled, had become the established basis of Jewish religion; the Law which might seem at first to have reduced every religious aspect of life to a formula. The rigidity of the system and its mechanical character have long been noted. The Jewish legal system has been interpreted by many Christians as a practical suffocation of any vital religious experience. They would be willing to apply Ezekiel's words to "the ten thousand things of [the] law,"[7] and say, "Can these bones live?"[8]

[7] Hos. 8:12 (A.R.V.).

[8] Ezek. 37:3.

To such a question the Psalter is the answer. Here is a matchless collection of poems that sprang from the depths of the human soul, poems of moving directness and sincerity. They give utterance to the spirit that found the law of the Lord a "delight."[9] That spirit was both collective and individual. Although it was rooted in devotion to the observance of a law which was essentially the collective concern of the whole community, one is aware in nearly every psalm of the personal experience of some individual. Someone has suggested that the book of Leviticus and the Psalter should be read side by side, and the point of that suggestion is true: to understand what the Law meant to the devout Jew, and what kind of piety it nourished, one must read the psalms.

The combination of love for the Law with the piety it inspired finds its most remarkable expression in the 119th psalm. The writer set himself a prodigious task. It was a threefold one. First, he took the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in their order and wrote a strophe of eight verses for each letter, making a total of 176 verses. Each verse in a strophe he began with the same letter. Translation unfortunately destroys this uniformity so that it does not appear in the English versions, but many editions of the Bible place the appropriate Hebrew letter at the head of each strophe. In the second place, he used in each verse some word that stood for the Law, such as "law," "commandments," "word," "statutes," "precepts," "testimonies," "judgments," "ordinances." In the third place, he says something in each verse about his own personal relation to the Law that he here so elaborately celebrates.

Such a rigid scheme as this did not leave much room for poetic originality, but it freely permitted the expression of that devotion to the Law which breathes so earnestly and so obviously through this long psalm. It is not surprising that such a complicated undertaking should contain many echoes of other psalms as well as some repetitions. The point is that here is the utterance of some earnest soul for whom every letter of the alphabet had something to say in praise of the Law. He gives no clue to his identity, although there

[9] Ps. 119:77.

are a few hints of a troubled background. He speaks of having been "afflicted."[10] He refers to the "proud,"[11] the "wicked,"[12] and others who, perhaps, had been the cause of some of his trouble. But the Law was more than a compensation for any past hardships. It was everything he could wish for. It gave peace, life, counsel, comfort, and light upon one's path. It endured forever. And this devout believer asked nothing more than to enter more deeply into it. His whole spirit of humility and devotion could not be more touchingly epitomized than in his closing words:

> I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant;
> For I do not forget thy commandments.

Another psalm that sings the praise of the Law is found in Ps. 19:7-14, which is a separate and complete psalm. Its connection with the preceding verses seems to have been accidental. There are several ways in which such an accident might easily happen. There are also cases where psalms now numbered as separate psalms are really one. Some of these will be mentioned later. The present case seems too clear for argument, provided one is prepared to admit the possibility that such mistakes in arrangement could happen at all. It may be observed in passing that far more confusing dislocations than these occur in a number of places throughout the Bible, as may easily be seen in Moffatt's translation.

In the opening verses of Ps. 19:7-14 there are six terms for the Law in as many consecutive lines. This is in the style of Psalm 119. In verse 10 the psalmist sums up the Law's supreme value; he tells what the Law was to him. He goes on in verses 11-13 to show how it had actually worked out in his own experience, for he himself is the "servant" referred to who had been "warned" and "rewarded." At the close he humbly lays his word of praise and acknowledgment before the Lord, from whom the Law had come, and who alone was the psalmist's "rock and redeemer." He is

[10] Ps. 119:67, 71, 75.
[11] Ps. 119:21, 51, 69.
[12] Ps. 119:53, 61, 110, 155.

quite unconscious of the fact that in doing this he has moved beyond the Law, which provided for many kinds of offerings, but not for this kind, not for words or writings. There is here no liturgical act or formula, no pilgrimage to a sacred shrine where offerings ordained by the Law were to be offered—just the simple prayer that his words and meditations, as he had written them here, might be "acceptable."

He has the same idea as the writer of the 119th psalm, who had said "Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill-offerings of my mouth, O Jehovah." [13] In the words of these two psalmists one is in the presence of that spirit of praise and prayer which is the underlying spirit of the whole Psalter.

Psalms and the Wise Men

There is still another psalm which belongs with these two in its attitude toward the Law. It is the one which stands, appropriately enough, at the beginning of the book as the first psalm. It recalls the wisdom writings in the way it expresses a judgment on men and their behavior, in its view that each kind of behavior has its inevitable consequence of reward or punishment, and in its balanced form so characteristic of the proverb style. If it had been placed somewhere in the book of Proverbs, no one would have taken it for a psalm.

In his reference to the wicked and sinners and scoffers the psalmist makes it clear that all Jews were not as devoted to the Law as he thinks they should be, nor as he himself was. His ideal was the man who gave himself to the study of the Law. The Law was not for him a burden or a yoke,[14] but a delight. He had it constantly in mind. The word "meditate" is too mild. The Hebrew suggests the picture of a man muttering to himself as he spells out something he is reading, or talking to himself as he walks along. It is the Law that he is spelling out, the Law that he is saying over to himself.

[13] Ps. 119:118 (A.R.V.).
[14] Matt. 23:4; Acts 15:10.

The fact that by this time the Law was a written document carried with it the advantage that one who possessed a copy could read it and study it anywhere, at any time. But this document was in a class by itself, or so it was believed. It had the status of "Bible." This meant not only that the Law was God's Law, but that what was written was in effect what God had written. And now it was no longer necessary to consult a priest or a prophet in order to find out the will of God. One could study the book. His devotion to the book was equivalent to his devotion to God. The book's perpetual validity was taken for granted, although it was tied to a past that was becoming constantly more remote. Devotion to such a book kept one looking backward for direction in his religious life. The priests became administrators of the Law rather than custodians of the oracle, and the prophets died out. The living voice of the God who had spoken through living men was silenced in the interest of the book that now took God's place—or, rather, the place he had had in the minds of the men who lived in those receding centuries when the book had been written.

It is an interesting coincidence that this transfer of attention from the living God to a document is illustrated in connection with this psalm. In Jer. 17:5-8 there is a closely parallel passage. It has the same balanced proverb pattern as the psalm, and it deals with the good man and the wicked man in substantially the same way. But in Jeremiah the wicked man is not the one who scoffs at the Law but the one who puts his trust in man, and the good man is not the one who devotes himself to the study of the Law but the one who trusts in the Lord. The writer of the first psalm has adapted an earlier saying to his own purpose of exalting the Law. For him the Law had become synonymous with God; what the Law said, God said. The transition from reliance on the living God to reliance on an ancient document is here seen in the making.

There are a number of psalms in the book which are of the wisdom type. A characteristic one is Psalm 112. It is not only a wisdom psalm but an alphabetic one as well. Like Psalm 119 it takes the alphabet for its pattern. The twenty-two successive lines of the

psalm begin with the twenty-two successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.[15]

The alphabetic pattern serves as a sort of frame in which to place the portrait which this wise man has drawn of the good man. It is a trustful, optimistic portrait. The virtues of the good man receive a rich reward. These virtues grow out of his delight in the Law, and they produce a life of beneficence, happiness, and security. At the close there is a very human touch that takes note of the wicked who are furious at the good man's welfare. The wise man who wrote the psalm, at least as far as the psalm represents him, looked at life easily from the standpoint of his doctrine that the good man is necessarily prosperous. He would probably have held that the converse was also true, that the man who prospers must be a good man. This was the view represented by the three friends in the book of Job. Those who held it as confidently as did those friends and this wise man were hypnotized by their doctrine and were thus prevented from seeing the many facts of life that clashed with their theory. Not all the wisdom psalms reflect such an easy optimism.

The author of Psalm 49, which is also a wisdom psalm, has quite another comment to make on wealth and welfare. He does not say the wealthy are wicked, but he sees that their wealth gives them a feeling of such importance in the community that they count themselves quite secure. But are they? There at the door stands death, like a shepherd waiting to gather his flock. And when he gets them together, whither will he lead them? There is but one place—the grave, the kingdom of the dead (Sheol)—and all their wealth and importance must be left behind. So the psalmist, and those for whom he speaks—evidently not the wealthy—need not be alarmed nor disturbed when they see men getting rich; they cannot take their riches with them.

This answer does not have the weight today that it had then, but it reflects the questioning which the Deuteronomic principle of retribution was beginning to raise among observant and thoughtful

[15] The enumeration of the lines omits the opening "Praise ye the Lord," which represents the single Hebrew word "Hallelujah."

men. This psalmist felt that it was a real discovery, and for him it was. He saw that it concerned all men and not Jews only, and his words must have had real helpfulness for those who had not already thought that far.

A deeper probing of a wisdom problem was made by the writer of Psalm 73. He does not discuss the matter abstractly but tells of a crisis in his own personal experience. He tells how the experience came to him, and tells it so vividly that his progress can be followed step by step. He admits that the situation almost overcame him, that he felt himself slipping. The prosperity of the wicked was something that he, who so wanted to trust in God, could stand no longer. Then he describes those wicked men, and in his impetuous words one feels the heat of his anger as he leads to the almost fatal climax of what seemed the futility of all his uprightness and fidelity. A paraphrase of his outburst might be: "These prosperous wicked men have everything their own way. Everybody respects them and says that God does not care. Where does that leave me?—trying as I do to keep my heart pure and my ways clean—me, with all the things I have had to bear! It's all no use. I can't stand it!"

In this mood he went one day to the sanctuary of God. Spiritual experiences elude detailed description, but he says that something "came" to him that day. He does not say whether he actually saw something happen which opened his mind to the new thoughts, or whether it was a wholly inner experience like that of Isaiah who "saw the Lord."[16] He simply says he "considered." Whichever it may have been, it brought him a twofold release.

First, there came to him with new significance the fact that those arrogant scoffers had but a precarious hold on life. However opulent they might be, their hold on the essential factor for the enjoyment of life—namely, life itself—was beyond their control. This idea was later to receive classic portrayal in the parable of Jesus about the rich man whose soul was required of him just when he had planned his new buildings.[17] This is a finer perception than

[16] Isa. 6:1.

[17] Luke 12:20.

was shown by the writer of Psalm 49, who saw only that the rich could not take their riches with them. This writer saw the tragedy in its proper place and perspective. The real tragedy was in the man himself, in his hopes and his defeats.

Second, and more profoundly, there came to him a realization of fellowship with God so rich, so complete, that all his previous envies and perplexities vanished. He realized how blind he had been. The supreme fact had escaped him that God had been with him all the time. Now it came to him in all its fullness. Now he knew that his whole desire, in heaven and earth, was God and God only. No matter how worn and wasted he might be in mind or body, he knew now that all the time his hand had been in God's hand. He knew now how good it was for him to draw near to God, and that the Lord God was his refuge. It was something to tell about, and he told it—in this psalm, whose underlying spirit is summed up so movingly in the lines:

> My flesh and my heart faileth:
> But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.

The parallel between this psalm and the dialogues in the book of Job has long been recognized. One wishes that Job could have reached the goal this psalmist had attained. But the psalm is not dependent on the book of Job for its significance. In its description of the way a devout believer found his faith and hope in God, the psalm not only is the most deeply felt of the wisdom psalms but gives the believer's faith and hope their finest Old Testament expression.

These three psalms, 112, 49, and 73, furnish a good illustration of the way psalms can differ even when they deal with almost identical subjects. In this case they lend themselves to arrangement in a series that moves from the simple and unquestioning attitude of Psalm 112 to the serious and searching thoughts of Psalm 73. There are other wisdom psalms that might be placed at different points in the series, such as Pss. 32:8-11; 34:11-22; 37; and others.

Psalms with Choral Refrains

How far such psalms were actually sung is a question. Ps. 49:4 suggests a musical background, and there is also the psalm's title, "For the Chief Musician." Many hymns that are sung in church today, when seriously considered, do not always justify their use as hymns, and similarly there are psalms of which there can be no positive assurance as to whether they were to be sung or not. There are some psalms, however, of which there can hardly be any doubt; their refrains make it almost a foregone conclusion that they were intended for antiphonal use. This use would involve at least two participants, one to lead and one to respond. The leader might be an individual or a small chorus. The responses might be sung by another individual, a second chorus, or the congregation. The congregation would almost certainly participate in the "Hallelujahs" and the "Amens."

In Psalm 136, which is one of this kind, the refrains are written out in full. These responses give the main subject of the psalm and are repeated without change by a choral or congregational group. The theme is the lovingkindness of God, which is developed by the leading voice. This voice, in its successive lines, gives a patriotic review of the way God had aided the nation in the past and builds up to the climax where the emphatic pronoun "us" crowns the psalm with joyful thanksgiving.

The psalm is not strikingly original. It uses many phrases that were the stock in trade of the temple singers, just as many hymns today are made up in a rather mechanical fashion. But that does not detract from the psalm's usefulness, especially for festival occasions; and one can imagine the earnestness and even the enthusiasm with which it would be sung. Psalm 135 is similar to Psalm 136 in form and content. Although no responses are written out, there is no reason why the same response that is used in Psalm 136 should not be used here in the same way. In verses 19 and 20 the changing first parts of the lines suggest the voice of a leader, while the unchanging second parts—"Bless ye the Lord"—suggest a general response.

Verses 15-18 appear much more suitably in Ps. 115:4-8; some accident may have led to their duplication here.

In contrast to these two cheerful songs for festivals, the eightieth psalm is a prayer out of distress. The refrain is given at verses 3, 7, 14, and 19. Here, as in Psalm 136, it strikes the keynote of the psalm. At verse 14 the refrain is incomplete, but when sung it was surely used in its entirety. It is also quite possible that the refrain was originally used after verse 10. This would divide the psalm into five strophes that would be more nearly uniform in length than the four which are now indicated. One hesitates to impose upon these Oriental poems a symmetry congenial to the Western mind, but the refrains seem to have been treated rather casually as far as their regular occurrence is concerned, so that it is both reasonable and reverent to supply them where they seem to have had a place in the actual singing.

How long the people had been suffering under the oppression described in the psalm is not indicated. Invasion and pillage had done their work. The northern names—Israel, Joseph, Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh—with no allusion to the southern name Judah, show that the psalm comes from the northern kingdom. This is not the only psalm that has a northern background. Others are Pss. 45; 77; 81; 89:1-18; 133. The psalm is a moving supplication to God for aid. Its use would be appropriate to a day of fasting and prayer. Its earnestness is deepened by its poetic beauty, especially the famous allegory of the vine. The psalm is original and deeply felt. It imparts its spirit of sorrow, humility, and penitence even to readers today who know nothing of the history that could evoke such a cry as this from hearts that were acquainted with grief.

Another psalm with refrains appear as two psalms, 42 and 43, but these originally must have been a single psalm. It differs from Psalm 80 in speaking for an individual rather than for a community, but is like it in being a cry out of distress. Just what the distress was the poem does not reveal. The references to enemies, adversaries, an ungodly nation, deceitful and unjust men, supply a background tense with emotion; but they stop short of making

clear whether they are to be understood literally or figuratively, and, if literally, just who is referred to?

This indefiniteness is one of the disappointing characteristics of all the psalms. It is not surprising that dates are not mentioned, because the Hebrews had no special interest in chronology. But the absence of names that might identify persons and occasions makes it impossible, except in a most general way, to assign any but a very few psalms to specific situations. Psalm 137 obviously refers to the beginning of the Babylonian captivity. Psalms which refer to kings and their affairs presumably belong to a period when the kingdom was still standing.[18] Psalms which exalt the Law come from a period when the Law had established itself as the foundation and the glory of the Jewish religion. Psalms which refer to the temple reflect a temple at Jerusalem, but whether Solomon's or Zerubbabel's has to be decided by a further study of the contents of the psalms in question.

These considerations help to make clear what the psalms are and what they are not. They are not poems designed to give historical information. They are not designed primarily to give factual information of any kind. The external situations which inspired them are indicated only in generalities and are secondary to the main purpose. This purpose is to give utterance to religious feelings, feelings of joy and sorrow, of doubts and fears, of hopes and aspirations, of protests and contritions. These feelings and experiences may be public or private. The poems may be planned for use in public, collective rituals, or they may have been written with no thought of liturgical ceremony, simply setting down in words something that stirred the writer's soul—as Paul cried out "Wretched man that I am!" or as Milton wrote his sonnet on his blindness, or Newman his "Lead, kindly Light."

It is in this perspective that one reads such a psalm as 42–43. The psalmist is in a situation so desperate that those about him assume that his God has cast him off. He almost feels so himself. And this is the heart of the matter which is pictured so dramatically in

[18] E.g., Pss. 21; 45; 72; 110.

verse 1. His tragedy lies in being cut off from all sacred places, ceremonies, and associations where he has found and worshiped God. If only God's light and truth will lead him back, then indeed can he again sing God's praise. Until this can be done, however, hope will sustain him. This light in his darkness shines out from the refrain, into which he has poured a depth of spiritual experience that has made his words ever since a treasure and a consolation to all souls in trouble. In it he has been able, like the Lord's Servant in Isaiah, "to speak a word in season to him that is weary." [19] With a strange felicity he has said a word that, though three times the same, has each time answered a different situation and each time in an increasingly triumphant spirit.

In this brief refrain he has dramatized his own inner struggle. It tells how he has conquered the despair of his soul by the hope that will not surrender. Though he is sick with weeping, he can look through the tears toward the promise of a coming restoration. "I shall yet praise him," he says. How that assurance was vindicated is not told. One would like to think that this "song in the night" was preserved because finally its author really did go once more to the altar and once more with harp and voice sing the praises of his God. However that may be, it is a fact that the praises he so yearned to sing have been sung by other voices which, inspired by those words of his, have been singing God's praises through all the long years down to the present day. And one familiar with this psalm, at once so beautiful, so sad, and yet so hopeful, cannot sing without emotion the familiar hymn:

> As pants the hart for cooling streams,
> When heated in the chase,
> So longs my soul, O God for thee,
> And thy refreshing grace.

There are other psalms with refrains, a goodly number of them, of which Psalm 107 is the most elaborate; but only one other calls for discussion here—the forty-sixth. It is like Psalm 80 in being

[19] Isa. 50:4.

congregational rather than individual, but differs from both 42–43 and 80 in being triumphant rather than discouraged and distressed. It has already been suggested that in Psalm 80 a refrain probably belonged after verse 10. It is even more probable that in Psalm 46 the refrain that now appears at verses 7 and 11 should also appear after verse 3. At any rate the refrain strikes the keynote of the psalm.

There is the same difficulty in the case of this psalm as with 42–43 and so many others—nothing in it is sufficiently definite to give it a satisfactory historical location. It gives the impression of having been inspired by a definite event, but the language is too general to make identification of the event possible. Furthermore, whatever the event may have been which inspired the psalm in the first place, the form of the psalm—which is so obviously designed for antiphonal use—indicates that it would be sung on more than one occasion. The general character of the language would have the practical advantage of making it available for many festival occasions. Yet, while it could be used with a certain latitude, it is too specific to be regarded simply as a psalm of general praise.

But for what occasion or what type of occasions would it be properly used? The answer seems to be given in the second strophe: at celebrations whose chief feature was a recognition of God as the protector of the Holy City. His protection had been proved in the past. It was the basis for the impressive lines with which the psalm begins. It is the central thought in the second strophe. And then in the third strophe the psalmist looks far forward into an ideal future when the peace of God will be the world's great consummation. It is from the vantage point of the Holy City, now central and secure, that he calls upon all men to "come, behold the works of the Lord."

The psalmist shows that he knew the prophets, especially Isaiah. Verse 6 seems an echo of Isa. 17:12-14, and the refrain inevitably suggests Isaiah's "Immanuel . . . God with us." [20] But more significant of the way he imitates the prophets is his introduction of God

[20] Isa. 8:8, 10.

himself as the speaker. The characteristic expressions of the prophets are "Thus saith the Lord" and "The word of the Lord came to me, saying . . ." With these brief introductions of the Lord as the speaker, the prophets proceed to say what they have to say—that is, what they believe the Lord has said to them and would have them say or, better, what the Lord would say if he chose to speak with a human voice. And the psalmist in verse 10 writes as the prophets might have written in letting God himself speak. The imagery the psalmist uses also has many similarities to the words of the prophets.

No discussion of this psalm would be complete without including a reference to the hymn it inspired Luther to write. In his opening line, "A mighty fortress is our God," he takes his start from the opening line of the psalm. The psalm serves, however, only as a point of departure, for he does not follow it, but proceeds to write an original Christian hymn. Yet though he does not follow the psalm, he has caught its essential spirit. He speaks with the same exultation that in the psalm celebrates the divine triumphs, and there is also a timeless quality about both psalm and hymn that lifts them above the level of historical particularities into an almost universal perspective.

Liturgical Psalms

The refrains are not the only indications that some psalms were intended for congregational use. There are psalms which show a certain liturgical movement that makes them essentially miniature liturgies. Such a one is Psalm 12. It is one of those psalms which upon first reading seem to reflect a constantly changing background. Yet the movement of thought proceeds step by step according to a well-planned order. In this case there stands at the beginning a brief cry for help, followed immediately by words that give the reason for the cry—faithfulness has disappeared, and deceitfulness rules. Then comes a prayer that the Lord will destroy the boastful but powerful oppressors who are defying man and God. With an abrupt transition God himself is introduced as the speaker, and in

his own words assures his suppliants that he will grant them the security they are panting for. The entrance of the divine speaker is a characteristic prophetic touch.[21] After this comforting assurance the psalm closes with an acknowledgment of the excellence of the divine words and a prayer that the security they promise may endure.

When this changing succession of the psalm's contents is recognized, it is only natural to inquire how such a psalm is to be understood. The answer is already suggested in the outline. These are the words used at times of public prayer for help, when the congregation is being opposed and oppressed. The mood is much like that of Psalms 42–43 and 80, but instead of simple alternation of stanza and response, Psalm 12 provides a well-ordered program which, though on a small scale, is essentially an order of worship, a liturgy. Regarded in this light, the successive parts fall naturally into a clearly arranged scheme of four distinct stages.

The first part voices the call and the occasion:

> Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth;
> For faithfulness has vanished from among the children of men.
> They speak falsity every one with his neighbor;
> With flattering lips and double meanings do they speak.

The second part prays for help:

> May the Lord cut off all flattering lips,
> The tongue that speaketh great things;
> Who say, "With our tongue we are strong,
> Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?"

These two parts are choral or congregational in character. The third part is the climax of the psalm and would most suitably be sung by an individual, preferably a priest, who would be the logical person to give the words of the divine oracle:

[21] Cf. Isa. 33:10, where these words are also found.

"For the oppression of the poor, for the groaning of the needy,
Now will I arise," saith the Lord,
"I will set him in the safety for which he pants."

Then follows the close, again choral or congregational:

The words of the Lord are pure words,
Silver tried in a furnace purified seven times.
Do thou keep us, O Lord,
And preserve us from this generation forever,
When the wicked walk on every side,
When the worthless are exalted among the sons of men.[22]

It is true that there are no rubrics giving directions for such an arrangement. But then there are no rubrics to tell that any of the refrains are to be sung responsively. The word "selah" which occurs with the refrains in Psalm 46 does not appear in 42–43 or 80, both of which have refrains, so that this obscure word does not throw any light on the use of refrains. Yet it seems beyond question that these repeated lines should be used as refrains are used today. The absence of rubrics, then, is no evidence that liturgical use is not in order, while the numerous musical references in the titles are positive indications favoring such use. In view of these facts it seems reasonable to conclude that psalms like the twelfth which show a progressive arrangement of contents so perfectly suitable for liturgical use were probably intended for that purpose.

The absence of rubrics is due to the fact that it is only the words that call for preservation. Those who used the liturgical psalms in the temple would know what to do at the proper times, just as today in liturgical churches everyone is supposed to know that he should stand for the reading of the psalms and the singing of the *Gloria Patri*. This does not justify too much confidence in details of the proposed procedures, but the general principle accounts so reasonably for the contents and arrangement of these psalms that the psalms immediately take on a reality and a significance that would be lacking without some such explanation.

[22] Trans. L.B.L., omitting two Hebrew words from v. 6.

In contrast to the prayer for help in Psalm 12 is the liturgy of praise and thanksgiving in Psalm 66. This is to be sung in the temple at a time of high festival. There is an opening chorus of praise which sings of God's victories over his foes. A second section, verses 8-12, is similar to the first in its call to praise, but this time the subject is the deliverance of the people rather than the conquest of enemies. These two more general sections have prepared the way for the third section, which, in contrast to the preceding ones, is individual and particular. A single worshiper comes to offer sacrifices and pay his vow. As he approaches the altar, the words in verses 13-15 are sung.

If the psalms had been provided with rubrics, there would be one at this point after verse 15, telling what the worshiper should do while the sacrifices were being received and offered by the priest. Then, after the ritual acts had been performed, the worshiper would turn to the other worshipers present and, as a Methodist might say, give his testimony. In this psalm, as in Psalm 12, the outline is suggested by the successive ideas the psalm presents; but in this case the liturgy is extended by the provision for an offering and sacrifice.

Perhaps the most obvious example of a liturgical psalm is the twenty-fourth. Its three parts are so different from each other that one thinks of them at first as separate psalms. And indeed they may well be—if not complete psalms, yet parts of psalms that originally had nothing to do with each other. The way these parts are brought together in Psalm 24, however, can hardly have been accidental, and this means that some unifying principle must have controlled their combination. The three parts may first be examined separately.

Part 1, verses 1-2, is a hymn of praise celebrating the divine power which is manifested in creating and sustaining the world. This theme recurs so frequently that it was evidently one the psalmists loved to use. It would form a suitable opening for any festal program.

Part 2, verses 3-6, is itself a miniature liturgy adapted, apparently, from Psalm 15. It opens with a question which is evidently asked by those who are approaching the sanctuary. To this question the priest

replies, and adds his blessing. Priest and people then unite in the closing words. This question-and-answer pattern occurs elsewhere —for example, in Isa. 33:14-16; Mic. 6:6-8. It is a natural and convenient form for liturgical use.

Part 3, verses 7-10, evidently reflects a processional of some kind. Some sacred object, perhaps the ark, representing the divine presence, is being carried in procession. The temple is reached, but its doors are closed. The marchers pause and call to those within, but they are challenged with the question, "Who is the King of glory?" They answer and then repeat their call. Again they are challenged. In their second reply they give the age-old title of Israel's God, "the Lord of hosts." And now the temple doors are opened, and the procession enters with its sacred symbol. This part is much more primitive and colorful in character than the two parts preceding. Here the King of glory is a warrior god. He is not exalted above the world as in part 1, nor is he present in the temple as in part 2, but goes from place to place as in the ancient days.[23]

These are the materials out of which the present liturgy is composed. It is the product of a time much later than that of any of its parts. The several parts, through their very familiarity, would be valuable primarily through their association with traditional rituals, and would be heard as aids to religion rather than as historical sources. No matter how ancient some of the ideas might be, they would be used and interpreted in terms of the ideas current in the days when the liturgy as a whole was arranged and used in the service of the later purpose. The same principle operates today when hymns and psalms are used because of the enduring mood and spirit which inspired them, and which they inspire, rather than because of their factual content. With similar freedom in the use of materials from the past—its past—this liturgy was put together by some leader or leaders of worship in the second temple. The complete order leads the worshiper into the temple on some high festival which celebrates the presence of God (1) in his world; (2) in the hearts and lives of his people; and (3) ceremonially, in the sacred

[23] Num. 10:35-36.

temple. It is an impressive epitome of some of the noblest and most enduring aspects of Old Testament religion.

The same thing could be said truly about the whole Psalter, which reflects not only these aspects but many others. There are psalms which use traditions of the past: for example, 68, 78, 105, 106, 135, 136. There are "songs of Zion": for example, 76, 84, 122, 125. There are many familiar ones: for example, 23, 51, 90, 103, 121. There are also "imprecatory" psalms and passages of an imprecatory character scattered here and there in many psalms.

Imprecatory Psalms

In any consideration of the Psalter as a whole, this last group cannot be overlooked. Such psalms as 109 and 149, to mention only the most glaring examples, cannot be measured by Christian standards. They must be considered in terms of their own world, against the hard and bitter background of a society which tried to deal out recompense for injuries on the basis of a crude equivalence. In Psalm 109, for instance, verses 6-9 are but the natural expression of one who had been unjustly sentenced and punished. His whole upbringing had familiarized him with the divine principle of punishment visited upon a sinner's descendants as well as upon the sinner himself. Perhaps he was familiar with Deut. 19:15-21, which seems to suggest a situation not too remote from the one to which he seems to refer. He had a just grievance against his adversary and prayed to God,

> Set thou a wicked man over HIM;
> And let an adversary stand at HIS right hand.
> When HE is judged, let HIM come forth guilty,[24]

and so forth. This is what had been brought on the psalmist by his adversary, and he had a right to demand equivalent redress.

Without any thought of justifying or condoning such a spirit it should not be overlooked that the writer believed more to be involved than his individual case. He sincerely believed himself to be

[24] Ps. 109:6-7 (A.R.V.).

a faithful servant of God. For him, his own personal cause was also God's cause, and he felt that he was wholly justified in calling upon his God for vindication. God would then be vindicating himself as well as his servant.

The identification of one's own cause with God's has been one of the most fruitful sources both of error and of horror in nearly all religions. These psalmists were not the first nor the last to exemplify it. The blood-stained pages of Christian history are ghastly testimonies to its consequences. That it should be represented in the Psalter is only another evidence of the all-inclusiveness of that great collection.

It is also a reminder that the psalms came out of real life, that they are the utterances of real persons, and that they can be properly understood only in relation to the situations and experiences that lie back of them. This includes the actual composition of a psalm. When a psalm was to be prepared for some ceremonial occasion, whether a prayer for help or a song of triumph, no question arose as to procedure. It was called for by "the chief musician," and was prepared as ordered. For many of these occasions the general pattern was conventional. All that was needed was to supply suitable words. These could be compiled from earlier hymns or liturgies, or they could be original compositions if a gifted writer was available.

Psalms That Close with Thanksgivings

Other kinds of psalms are not, at first, so clear. When a psalmist speaks of sickness unto death, or of some bitter affliction or desperate danger, one wonders how it was psychologically possible for him, while he was in the condition described, to write a poem about it. While this is not wholly impossible, there are so many psalms of this kind that it hardly seems probable that it could have happened every time. Not until the psalmist had recovered or was restored or delivered would he be in a position to write so freely and so well. When that time came, however, the experience from which he had been released was still so vivid in his mind that he described it in the present tense, in the dramatic way characteristic of all the

biblical writers. Today these psalms seem to have sprung out of the midst of the trouble they describe and out of the identical moments to which they refer; but if the writer had not recovered or escaped, his psalm would not have been written.

This accounts for another aspect of many of these psalms which has been much discussed. In many of them, after the sickness or danger or other hardship has been described, there follows an outburst of praise and thanksgiving which, in the light of what has immediately preceded, seems abrupt and incongruous.[25] The simplest and most obvious explanation of these joyful closes is that the psalms were not written until the psalmist's soul had been delivered from death, his eyes from tears, and his feet from falling.[26] They express the psalmist's gratitude for the aid and comfort God had bestowed on him.

When the storm had passed and could be recollected in tranquillity, then and not till then would the psalm be written. It would then contain not only the account of the distress, but also the thanksgiving for the recovery that had occurred. Reference has already been made to the absence of rubrics in the liturgical psalms. The fact is that all the familiar modern devices of printing, punctuation, and other literary directions were unknown in the days the psalms were written. There was just one thing to do, and that was to preserve the words—and that was a good deal. This general absence of rubrics allows for the possibility that some of these psalms accompanied a liturgical act. Verses 12-14 of Psalm 116 seem almost certainly to represent the presentation of a drink offering in the temple. Verses 1-11 recite the trouble the worshiper had been through. Verses 12-14 are the accompaniment of his act of devotion. Verses 15-19 give the prayer offered after the liturgical act had been performed.

When it is once recognized that these psalms were written down after the experiences they describe, the word of praise and thanksgiving at the close is the most natural thing in the world. This feeling, and also the way the psalms follow the event, are epitomized in

[25] E.g., Pss. 6; 22; 28; 56; 69.

[26] Ps. 116:8.

the words of the fortieth psalm, which might, indeed, serve as a motto for most of the Psalter:

> I waited patiently for Jehovah;
> And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
> He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay;
> And he set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.
> And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God:
> Many shall see it, and fear,
> And shall trust in Jehovah.[27]

[27] Ps. 40:1-3 (A.R.V.).

Chapter VIII

THE LATEST WRITINGS

When the Deuteronomic Bible was completed, it might well seem to be the last word in its field. Its basic document had been prophetically validated, and the application of its law to the nation had been worked out for the whole history from Moses to the Exile. God's will for his people was thus definitely stated and was accessible to all readers. But, desirable as it might be to have the divine will in fixed and final form, one consequence was inevitable: it closed the door against any addition or change. While it might seem perfect and complete at the time it was written, it necessarily stopped at that point. But the nation's life went right on, and new conditions were constantly arising. So if the Deuteronomic Bible was to be maintained as the complete and final will of God, each generation would be getting further and further away from the time when that divine will had been received as adequate and sufficient. How could such a document keep up with the continuing life of the changing circumstances? The answer is, it could not. The principles it set forth might be applied to new situations, but who would make the new applications, and who could guarantee their validity? This difficulty led to further writings, and the Deuteronomic Bible was quietly superseded by the later Bible of the priestly writings, which, from that time on, became the authoritative document.

These two Bibles both had their center of gravity in their legal content, but in addition to the legal material they contained also much narrative material, and together they gave, in their sketchy way, a perspective that led from the Creation to the Exile.

This was not the end of the story. A still later historical situation became the occasion for a third document, which, while it did not reach the level of the Deuteronomic and Priests' Bibles, never-

theless undertook for the third time to set forth the true relation of the Hebrews to their God. The new historical situation was the one that centered in Nehemiah, the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the definite centralizing of Jewish interests in the Holy City. It inspired some writer to show the religious significance of the Hebrew nation from his own later point of view.

The accounts of Nehemiah and his period would obviously be new material, but for the national traditions the writer could draw upon all the Old Testament literature that was extant in his day. This would include the Deuteronomic and Priests' Bibles, some of the prophetic writings, some of the wisdom literature, and some of the psalms. In view of his references to still other sources, additional material was accessible which has since disappeared. His work took shape in the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. His name is, of course, unknown; but as the book of Chronicles constitutes the main part of his work, he is named, for convenience, the "Chronicler." How large a group he represented is not known, but the inclusion of his work along with the other sacred writings is sufficient evidence of his importance. His work was written many years after Nehemiah; but Nehemiah had been of heroic stature, memoirs of him were at hand, and, above all, his work had supplied the background for the appearance of the Priests' Bible, to which could now be appended the writings of the Chronicler himself. He thus had a twofold purpose: (1) to give his own idealized picture of his people; and (2), with Nehemiah and his work serving as a kind of historic anchorage, to give an account of what he supposed to be the circumstances of the promulgation of the Law by Ezra.

Characteristics of the Chronicler

The book of Chronicles is invaluable for the light it throws upon the composition and character of many of the Old Testament books. The great use it makes of material found elsewhere in the Old Testament affords an opportunity to compare those sources with the use the Chronicler made of them. He not only quoted directly, but freely expanded and omitted, so that the material thus taken should

fit into his scheme and serve his particular purpose. He was concerned primarily with the presentation of a point of view, and only secondarily—if even that—with historical accuracy. History for its own sake was not yet thought of. The traditions of the past were valued and preserved for the use that could be made of them in illustrating or confirming later ideas which they might or might not contain.

The main business was not with the past but with the present, with the days in which the writer lived, with the people about him, and with the ideas he thought they should hold. In pursuit of this purpose writers were not deterred by any sanctity that might supposedly have been attached to the writings they used. The Chronicler treated the Deuteronomic Bible with a high hand, so that the resultant picture differs widely from the earlier one. But he made his point, and the earlier picture has been effectively superseded by the later one which the Chronicler himself drew.

He was a true son of the Law, and his work was a product of his own devotion. He believed the tradition that the priestly legislation had originated with Moses, but he knew also that the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings showed hardly a trace of its observance. He seems to have felt this incongruity, and he undertook to supply what he felt to be lacking. He told the story as he thought it should be told; that is, he rewrote the history, as it was given in those earlier books, in the way he thought it should have happened—perhaps as he thought it really did happen.

It is the relation of this rewriting to what had already been written that makes the book of Chronicles so interesting and so instructive. Did the Chronicler think his own work would suppress and supersede the writings he used which were already in the Old Testament? If not, did he suppose that no comparisons would be made? And if comparisons were made, how did he think the matter of reliability would be divided between accounts that differed? There are no answers to such questions. But the fact remains that the Chronicler's work now stands in the Old Testament alongside the books he quoted so freely, and that the wide variations between

the two must be provided for in any theory about the accuracy or reliability of the Old Testament writings.

The characteristics of the Chronicler's method and point of view can be most conveniently indicated by specific examples. The story which he was most eager to tell began with David, but he gave his work an appearance of a more inclusive range by beginning it at the beginning—that is, with Adam! On the basis mainly of the book of Genesis he compiled a genealogical list that extended from Adam to Saul,[1] assuming that the narratives concerning that long period were not necessary for his purpose, or that they could easily be found elsewhere if anybody wanted them. Saul he dismissed in a single brief chapter,[2] which, however, is long enough to include in its closing words three of the Chronicler's controlling ideas. They are touched only lightly, but they are there.

The Emphasis on Retribution

One of these is the extreme degree to which he carried the principle of retribution. Deuteronomy had enunciated the principle; and, in spite of some protests such as those in Jeremiah, Job, and Psalm 73, it had become fundamental in Hebrew religious thought. The Chronicler applied it rigorously even where its application necessitated a revision of what had been said in his sources. This case of Saul illustrates both the application and the revision.

Most of this chapter about Saul is identical with the last chapter of First Samuel. But the Chronicler extended that account by adding his explanation of Saul's untimely end, saying that the Lord slew Saul for his transgression,[3] although in the passage he had just quoted from First Samuel it was stated that Saul had died by his own hand. Retribution was at work. And throughout his book he made clear his belief that disasters came to kings "because they had

[1] I Chron. 1–9.
[2] I Chron. 10.
[3] I Chron. 10:13-14.

forsaken Jehovah, the God of their fathers,"[4] or in some way had done wickedly.[5]

While this sort of theological explanation of historical events is not peculiar to the Chronicler, he exhibits it in a notable degree, and this is one reason why his work is so illuminating to one who wishes to read his Old Testament with discrimination. The principle involved concerns the distinction between an event and the cause or reason given for it. It is a principle that is easily overlooked and deserves some emphasis, especially here in connection with the work of the Chronicler. The Old Testament contains a great mass of historical material. It also contains, interwoven with the historical material, interpretations of that material; and interpretations belong in the field of theology rather than of history. These explanations, which tell why certain things happened, reflect the religious beliefs which, for the several writers, supplied a frame of reference that gave the historical events they dealt with a certain coherence and unity. It gave the events their places in a great, all-embracing scheme. So these devout recorders found the chief significance of past events in the way those events illustrated or confirmed their own religious convictions. The principle is of more importance than at first appears.

The Old Testament has been so exalted and idealized that a devout but undiscriminating reader is inclined to regard its every statement as having divine authority. He does not realize that a fact is one thing and its explanation or interpretation quite another, that a factual statement may be quite correct and the explanation attached to it quite erroneous. When an Old Testament writer is found to have stated definitely and directly that "the Lord did something *because* . . ." it must be recognized that the "because" is the expression of the writer's belief—no more, no less. It is not inherent in the fact, but was supplied by the writer, who in this way presented some objective fact so that it illustrated and confirmed his personal belief.

[4] II Chron. 21:10; 24:24 (A.R.V.).

[5] II Chron. 12:2; 25:20; 26:16-20; 28:5, 19; 33:10-11; 36:16-17.

Although this principle is clear enough in the case of writings outside the Old Testament, its application to the Old Testament writings is too often evaded or denied. But it is these writings themselves that make the application of the principle imperative and inevitable. It is not a matter of indifference to a man who has suffered sickness or bereavement or other disaster whether he is being punished for the sin of his ancestors [6] or for his own.[7] The divine procedure is radically different in the two cases. If the interpreters had agreed among themselves, or if the proposed explanations had proved generally enough convincing, such a book as Job would never have been written.

The writings of the Chronicler supply an excellent illustration of this distinction between an event and its explanation. It appears in the way he altered a passage quoted from II Sam. 24. The event concerned is the pestilence which is described as a punishment on David because he had taken a census of the people. The story probably survived because it culminated in the purchase of the ground on which the temple was built, and its historicity is not now under discussion. The stories in II Sam. 24 and in I Chron. 21 both tell that David was "moved" to number Israel. But when it is asked, "Moved by whom?" the answer in Samuel is that the Lord did it, while the Chronicler's answer is that Satan did it. Both these answers cannot be correct. The difference between them is due to the different ideas of the respective writers. They both had the same story to tell, but one accounted for it in one way and the other accounted for it in another.

It is in this light that one must understand the numerous statements that tell what the Lord thought or why he did what he did. As a matter of fact, what these statements tell is what the writers *believed* the divine purposes to have been; and they were made in much the same spirit that leads many a preacher today to tell his people just what the Lord is now doing in the world and why he is

[6] Deut. 5:9.

[7] Ezek. 18. The modern idea of heredity is not involved here; in both cases the experience is attributed to a direct divine act. See p. 33.

doing it. The interpretations may be right, or they may be wrong, but their rightness or wrongness is that of their proponents. Whatever authority the right interpretations have must depend on their inherent correctness rather than on their occurrence in an ancient document, even in one that is traditionally as sacred as the Old Testament. The recognition of this distinction, then, is necessary in reading the work of the Chronicler, for he, like other Old Testament writers, supplied his own theological explanations for the many events he recorded. He went beyond them in the extent to which he found these explanations in the principle of retribution.

Emphasis on God's Supremacy

Another of the Chronicler's controlling ideas is shown in the way he emphasized the greatness of God by making the divine action such a determining factor in historic events that the part taken by men became almost negligible. Saul is a case in point. The source quoted by the Chronicler tells that Saul committed suicide. This did not satisfy the Chronicler. He ignored the suicide and explained Saul's death as an act of retribution carried out by God himself.

One of the most characteristic examples of the Chronicler's use of this principle is his account of an invasion of Israel by Moab, Ammon, and the men of Mount Seir in the days of Jehoshaphat.[8] He had already stated that Jehoshaphat had in Jerusalem 1,160,000 soldiers.[9] But when word of the invasion comes, Jehoshaphat apparently forgets all about this enormous army and proclaims "a fast throughout all Judah." He goes to the temple and offers a prayer—supplied by the Chronicler—and then waits to be told what to do. Thereupon a levite appears and tells everybody not to be afraid, "for the battle is not yours, but God's," and adds that they should all go out the next morning and "see the salvation of the Lord." So the next morning Jehoshaphat calls the choir together and has them put on their vestments, start singing, and go out "before the army." This is the only reference to the army in this episode. Soldiers and

[8] II Chron. 20.
[9] II Chron. 17:14-19.

people together are simply bystanders looking on to see what the Lord will do. The Moabites and the rest then turn against each other until all are killed. The self-slaughtered invaders leave so much booty on the field that it takes three days to gather it in. After that everybody returns to Jerusalem, led by the musicians.

What one would think of this tale were it found anywhere but in the Old Testament may be left to the imagination, but it is a clear example of the way the Chronicler wanted to portray the past. As he understood it, and believed it to be, it was a sort of panorama in which the divine acts were everything and the human participants hardly anything.

There are at least two reasons why such a narrative would be credible in the Chronicler's day. One was that such incidents would be considered quite possible in the world as it was then known. The other was that King Jehoshaphat had lived, in round numbers, five hundred years before the Chronicler, quite far enough in the past for any kind of legends to be told about him. The fact that nothing of the sort is told about Jehoshaphat in the book of Kings would be nothing against it as far as the Chronicler was concerned. It was a perfect illustration of what he believed and of what he wanted to teach, and he felt that no further questions need be raised.

The account of Jehoshaphat is not the only one of the kind. There is an account of Abijah in II Chron. 13 which tells how God put to flight Jeroboam's army of 800,000 men, so that Abijah's army of 400,000 could pursue them and kill 500,000. In II Chron. 14 there is an account of an Ethiopian force of 1,000,000 that came to fight Asa, who thereupon called upon the Lord for help. The Lord then "smote" the Ethiopians so that they "fled" and were "overthrown, that they could not recover themselves." The Chronicler was evidently convinced that, if the people only believed in the Lord, he would "smite" or "overthrow" the largest armies that could confront them. By believing he meant having confidence that this was what the Lord would do. All the people had to do was look on at the Lord's work. Their own armies had nothing to do but kill the ene-

mies they could catch up with in the flight and then gather in the booty.

These numbers not only go far beyond those given in the Chronicler's sources but seem incredible in view of the size and resources of the country. The total population of all Palestine today is estimated at little more than 1,500,000,[10] and the Chronicler was not dealing with the whole country but only with the smaller and poorer part from Jerusalem south.

Glorification of David

The third controlling idea so characteristic of the Chronicler is hinted at in the closing words of his brief account of Saul: the Lord "turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse." [11] With Saul out of the way he was ready to take up the main story, which, from his point of view, began with David. He regarded David's kingdom as the true Israel, the true custodian and representative of the divine purposes. Historically, throughout the reigns of David and Solomon the kingdom included the north as well as the south. After Solomon's death the old division between north and south reasserted itself; the northern kingdom, Israel proper, set up its own little kingdom; and the Davidic line was reduced to the still smaller kingdom of Judah, which had been David's before he gained control of the north. The Chronicler saw the break as a wicked rebellion on the part of Israel and gave his whole attention thereafter to the kingdom of Judah and the fortunes of the line of David.

Of all the liberties the Chronicler took with his material, the most amazing and the most high-handed was his treatment of the northern kingdom. It is the most conspicuous example of the way one Old Testament writer felt free to use the writings of another. There is no reason why he should not do this if he wanted to, but it should be recognized as one of the many evidences that the Old Testament writers themselves did not regard other Old Testament writings as

[10] *The World Almanac,* 1944, gives the population, estimated in 1942, as 1,585,500.

[11] I Chron. 10:14.

too sacred to use in any way that suited their purpose. It was quite possible for a writer like the Chronicler to select and edit his material in such a way as to give an entirely different impression from that given by the sources on which he drew; and, as a matter of fact, this is what he did.

His exaltation of David appears even in the amount of space allotted to him. Of the twenty-nine chapters of First Chronicles, nine are devoted to genealogical lists (Adam to Saul), one to Saul, and the remaining nineteen—two thirds of the whole—to David. David's wealth and power are exploited, as well as the great part he had—according to the Chronicler—in providing for the temple that was to be built. David's desertion to the Philistines, the affair with Bathsheba, Absalom's rebellion, and other items that might reflect on the power and the glory of an ideal king are omitted. The Chronicler felt that all that was best in the religion of his people was due to the devotion and success of this great ruler.

In the Chronicler's enthusiastic glorification of David there appears a less important but characteristic trait—his love for large numbers. David is made king by a delegation of 339,600 warriors.[12] David pays 600 shekels of gold for the site of the future temple[13] instead of the paltry fifty shekels mentioned in II Sam. 24:24. David's preparation for the building of the temple includes 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents of silver,[14] to which he adds 3,000 talents of gold and 7,000 talents of silver as a personal contribution.[15] The number of animals sacrificed at special times runs into many thousands.[16]

In spite of the biased way the Chronicler told his story it is worth noting that his work has dominated later conceptions of the dazzling glory of David and the terrible wickedness of the northern kingdom. One need only consider how David would have to be regarded if the Chronicler had not written his book. His work has made it

[12] I Chron. 12:23-37.

[13] I Chron. 21:25.

[14] I Chron. 22:14.

[15] I Chron. 29:3-4.

[16] I Chron. 29:21; II Chron. 29:32-35; 30:24; 35:7-9.

inevitable that the David of Second Samuel should be looked at in the glorious light which he himself supplied.

The book of Chronicles comes to its close with the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, the point at which the book of Kings also stops. From this point on the work of the Chronicler covers new ground, continuing into the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It seems to be simply a clerical accident that the first few verses of Ezra are duplicated in II Chron. 36:22-23, where they break off in the middle of a sentence.

Since the books Ezra-Nehemiah, originally a single book, cover more than a century, in view of their brevity it would be possible for them to give only a very sketchy view of the period even if their every word could be relied on. Unfortunately, this is not the case; they show such difficulties and confusions that opinions differ widely on just what story they have to tell. There is general agreement on Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the city walls. But opinions about Ezra and his work vary all the way from the traditional acceptance of the story as it stands, in spite of its difficulties, to denial that there ever was such a person as Ezra and assertion that he was invented by the Chronicler. The great body of opinion today lies strewn between these widely separated extremes.

Such variant views would be impossible if the actual contents of the books did not raise the problems for which these various proposals are offered as solutions, but the one opinion that is practically unanimous is that the books as they stand do not give a coherent picture of the persons and events with which they deal. If many Bible readers do not notice such problems, that is not because the problems are not there, but because the traditional way of reading the Bible has not encouraged devout believers to attend to the actual significance of what they are reading. They read for "religious" purposes, as one might read *The Pilgrim's Progress,* knowing that there is nothing actual back of the story, that it is something told purely for purposes of edification. They do not realize that one who purports to write of historical persons and events, and whose accounts of these are either erroneous or hopelessly confused, may be an un-

reliable guide in other fields as well. If no historical items were stated or implied, the value of the writing could be measured by other standards than those of logical consistency or historical accuracy; but when these are basic to the coherence of the narrative, then such matters cannot be ignored if the writing is to be taken seriously.

Only the commentaries can attempt any adequate treatment of the questions raised in these two difficult books, but a few matters may be mentioned here. There are three points on which there is general agreement. First, the two books are the work of the Chronicler, and they continue and complete the book that immediately precedes them in the English Bible. Second, the Chronicler was a compiler as well as an editor, using various sources and using them as freely as he did those upon which he drew for the first part of his work. Third, in Neh. 1–7 there is a source of highest value and reliability, having a quality of reality similar to that of the great narrative in II Sam. 9–I Kings 2. Beyond these three points the paths diverge.

One example of the many perplexities raised by the Chronicler's work is, as has been said, the uncertainty about Ezra himself. Just who was he, and what did he do? The uncertainty extends to the relation of Ezra both to the work and to the date of Nehemiah. The Chronicler's account refers, for instance, to a king Artaxerxes in connection with both Nehemiah and Ezra, and he apparently considered that there was but one and the same Artaxerxes throughout his narrative. But there were two kings of that name in this general period, and some of the problems of the book might be solved if one could suppose that the Artaxerxes of the days of Nehemiah was the first of that name (464-424 B.C.), and the one of the days of Ezra was the second (404-358 B.C.). This is only one case where the Chronicler shows that he was not sure of the relative dates of the Persian kings.

Historically it would seem that the one reliable feature in these books is the story of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls during the reign of Artaxerxes I. The account of Ezra lacks this reliability. The uncertainty about him was not confined to these two

books, nor did it prevent the growth of later legends about him. In the book of Ecclesiasticus there appears a long survey of the great men of Israel's history.[17] In this list Nehemiah appears, but not Ezra[18] In II Maccabees there is an account of Nehemiah's work,[19] from which Ezra is also absent. In contrast to these references is the amazing story in II Esdras 14, in which Ezra rewrites the twenty-four books of the (Hebrew) Scriptures after they have been lost. It is this later line of tradition that has seen in Ezra the father of the scribes, the founder of the Great Synagogue and the restorer of the Law—really a second Moses.

The Homiletic Use of History

Another aspect of Old Testament writings is conspicuously illustrated by Ezra-Nehemiah. It grows out of the historical confusion already mentioned. It raises the question of the historical reliability of all Old Testament writings that deal with persons and events which, at the time of the writing, belonged to a past that was often quite remote. In the case of Ezra-Nehemiah the events reported were of outstanding significance. They involved the central basis and interest of the Jewish community. They had not been done in a corner. They occurred among a people who were presumably literate and who were acquainted with methods of keeping records. If any period of Israel's history might be expected to give an accurate account of itself, it would be this one. Yet the Chronicler was apparently an earlier Gallio who "cared for none of those things." Out of the materials he had, or might have had, he put together a document which is so confused, and in places demonstrably so erroneous, that it has remained a puzzle to this day. Oesterley and Robinson in their *Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* say that the book is "unskillfully put together," that "the compiler's knowledge . . . was inadequate owing to want of data," and that he "had preconceived ideas with which he colored the history." [20]

[17] Ecclus. 44–49.
[18] Ecclus. 49:13.
[19] II Macc. 1:18-36.
[20] (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1934), p. 125.

These facts easily account for the book's lack of reliability, but Oesterley and Robinson fail to give any reason why such uncertainties should be present in a work in which, one would think, they might so easily have been avoided. The answer lies in the purpose of the Chronicler. He was not trying to write a history or even to write historically. If he had been asked for a scientific history, he would not have understood what was meant. His interest in what Oesterley and Robinson call his "preconceived ideas" left him quite unconcerned about other matters, so that his book is full of the Law and the liturgy, to which the "historical" references supply a kind of background like the music in a moving picture.

All this means that the Chronicler's work is to be regarded homiletically rather than historically. In this feeling he did not stand alone. It was the prevailing point of view of his time. It would never have occurred to anyone in his day to raise historical questions about what had been written. Indeed, this attitude toward religious writings is almost as prevalent today as it was then, and many devout Bible readers have no more idea of historical disciplines, and no more interest in them, than the Chronicler and his contemporaries had in the days when his book was being written.

When reading Old Testament books which deal with times when no writing or records are even hinted at, one should be on his guard against a too implicit confidence in "historical" statements. If the Chronicler and his contemporaries failed in their late day to preserve an accurate account of the period from the building of the second temple to the days of Ezra, it seems even less probable that the writers of other books could be accurate when they dealt with events which are alleged to have happened five hundred, a thousand, or even more years before any attempt was made to record them.

This, then, is one value of Ezra-Nehemiah, namely, the way it sets this general principle in such clear light. There are other Old Testament books, like the books of Kings, which deal with traditions of the past; but even when they are more consistent than Ezra-Nehemiah, they are no less controlled by the theological point of view. However complete and accurate the sources may have been

which are so constantly referred to, the selections were all made homiletically in the interest of the theological purpose.

The Old Testament undoubtedly rests upon a historical basis. But if that basis is to be recovered, the recovery can be accomplished only when the material is sifted and tested by the best principles of historical research. If this process leaves some parts or periods obscure, as in the case of Ezra, that obscurity cannot be dispelled by a misplaced reliance upon documents which were written for quite other than historical purposes. The Chronicler's work, just because it is such an extreme case, supplies an important illustration of what the narrative books of the Old Testament are and what they are not. It makes doubly clear their religious character and also constitutes a warning, often greatly needed, against using them in a way their true character distinctly forbids.

A New Type of Writing Appears

There is one other type of Old Testament literature to be mentioned. It is found in the books of the prophets in passages, usually brief, which differ so widely from the sayings that come authentically from the prophets named in the titles of the books that they can only be regarded as among the additions, previously referred to, which were so easily made when the words of the prophets were being compiled.

The experiences of the Babylonian captivity led to a change in prophetic ideas. Before the Exile the prophets had devoted themselves to rebuking and warning the people. During and after the Exile it was felt not only that the earlier prophets had been vindicated but also that there had been a sufficient punishment upon the nation for its sins. A new hope was born, and the people began to look forward to a new day. Men arose who proclaimed a message of comfort and reassurance. Not only were their words welcomed, but they threw an entirely new light upon the prophetic words of the past, and they began to find their way into the collections of the earlier sayings.

Until the books were definitely fixed in the canon, additions could

still be made to them. The canonization constituted a sort of editorial "deadline," up to which time it was quite convenient to incorporate new sayings which were felt to round out the earlier prophetic words. It was only natural and certainly quite permissible to bring the prophetic messages up to date by attaching to some earlier warning or threat a word to show that, in the light of the later hope, the bitter warnings of the past had been succeeded by promises of a brighter future.

These messages of promise constitute a typical group of sayings that are now incorporated in the books of the prophets. They are usually termed "apocalyptic." This word is applied to a variety of ideas that cluster about the hope that, by divine power, a blessed future will be provided for the righteous. Such a hope would flourish especially in times of distresses or disasters that seemed quite hopeless without divine aid. Only the beginnings of this type of literature are found in the Old Testament. They are more or less fragmentary and are attached to earlier prophetic oracles.

The book of Amos gives a good illustration of the character of these sayings and of the way later sayings were attached to the words of an earlier time. The prophet Amos had rebuked the people bluntly and harshly and had warned them of approaching disaster. The disaster came. The words of the prophet were preserved and became an enduring testimony to the divine demands made in the prophet's day. Years afterward, when new faith and hope had sprung up, there was appended to the collection of the words of Amos a new word:

> In that day will I raise up the tablernacle of David that is fallen,
> And close up the breaches thereof;
> And I will raise up its ruins,
> And I will build it as in the days of old. . . .
> And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel. . . .
> And they shall no more be plucked up out of their land.[21]

[21] Amos. 9:11-15 (A.R.V.).

Here speaks the spirit of the prophet who said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." [22]

These "comforting" words were not always added at the end of a collection. They could just as well be placed in the body of a collection where an editor or collector thought desirable. To a modern reader some of these words do not seem closely connected with their context, but that was not as important to the original editors as the point they wished to make—that the dark past could now look forward to a bright future.

An interesting example of a saying placed in the body of a collection is the one in Isa. 2:2-4 and in Mic. 4:1-4. In this case the same saying was evidently known and loved by at least two editors, both of whom wanted to include it in their collections—and did. Just why either one put it exactly where he did is not clear, for in neither case does the saying relate to its present context.[23] But it is one of those "comforting" words that was too good to be lost, so it was saved twice over.

Two aspects of these "comforting" words should be noted. In the first place, they are anonymous. Not only do they represent points of view later than those of the prophets named in the titles of the books in which they appear, but they come from men who were far more interested in the thing said than in the name of the person who had said it. The fact that most of the Old Testament is anonymous shows this to have been the general point of view. If the value of the Old Testament writings depended on knowing the names of the individual authors, only a very small part would be of any use. An author's name is a welcome discovery, especially when accompanied by his date and background, but to obtain this is often impossible. Usually a book or chapter or paragraph must be understood and evaluated on the basis of its contents, and on the relation of these to any historical situations that can be learned from other sources. As

[22] Isa. 40:1.

[23] The translators of Mic. 4:1 by supplying the word "but" have suggested a connection which the Hebrew text does not give.

a matter of fact, this is the basis upon which most of the Old Testament has to be understood.

In the second place, these anonymous "comforting" words are imaginative and general rather than precise and specific. Looking into the future, they dealt with hopes and ideals which were pictured necessarily in terms of the world in which the prophet lived: his geography, his politics, his religion, his God. It was only in such terms that what he said could have any meaning in his day. They supplied the imagery, the vocabulary, in which he naturally expressed himself. Of course the imaginative and figurative character of these sayings would inevitably leave them open to imaginative use and interpretation, especially when a desired anticipation was not fulfilled. The interpretation given in Dan. 9:24-27 of the seventy years mentioned in Jer. 25:11; 29:10; Zech. 1:12 is an example of this sort of thing in the Old Testament itself. And these sayings have been appealed to as authority for all sorts of fanciful interpretations down to the present day.

The Day of the Lord

As time passed the "comfort" idea, which was sufficient as far as the Jews alone were concerned, was felt to carry implications that reached beyond them. Its very brightness implied a shadow, a dark side—not for the faithful Jews but for the unfaithful, the wicked, whether Jews or foreigners. The term that stands conveniently for the more inclusive idea is "the day of the Lord."

Like so many of these terms its meaning must be discovered from its context. Its central idea is of a divine act, and the time when that act occurs is the "day" referred to. The act is primary; the time, or day, is secondary. As there could be many acts, so there could be many days. The significance of any particular day would depend on the character, purpose, and scope of the particular act.

In Amos 5:18, for instance, the term represents a popular belief in a day of divine triumph. The triumph in this case was evidently supposed to accrue unconditionally to the advantage of the people. No question was raised or implied as to any obligations on the peo-

ple's part. They assumed that any day of the Lord would be a bright day for them. Amos challenged this idea. He was sure that certain divine demands must be met before the people could count on the divine favors. Two different ideas of the day's significance here confronted each other—illustrating the necessity of allowing the context to determine the meaning of the term.

This was only the beginning of the various changes of meaning through which the term passed in the course of its continued use. It came at last to include a group of ideas of which the most characteristic were: (1) the triumph of the righteous; (2) the overthrow of the wicked; (3) the divine act, wholly a work of God; and (4) finally, a sort of "last act," settling once and for all the conflict between good and evil. Its certainties were those of faith and hope, but these were offset by serious limitations. It was the kind of doctrine that is championed only by those who regard themselves as its beneficiaries. It omitted any specific indication of just what constituted the good and evil that were to be established and destroyed. Its date was wholly indefinite; it was simply projected into a vague future.[24] But in spite of these complications the term has served, and still serves, as a label or trade mark characteristic of many of these "future" passages that were later added to the collections of the prophetic sayings.

Isaiah 24–27

One of the most striking and characteristic of the passages which, in their imaginative and pictorial way, look into the future is Isa. 24–27. It is complete in itself and stands in the book of Isaiah in what might be termed "splendid isolation." The first thing to do with such a passage is to read it—read it straight through without pause. Only in that way can one get its full impact. It takes one into a world of thought and idea so foreign, so remote, so unfamiliar in comparison with the world today, that one almost despairs of finding any clue to its significance.

[24] If the scripture statements are to be taken literally and preserved eternally, the day can never come; for these statements are all in the future tense and will remain so no matter what happens.

It obviously deals with the future—the future as it might be imagined by someone living before the Christian era, not the future as imagined by someone living in the twentieth century A.D. It deals with universal topics—the isles of the sea, the uttermost parts of the earth, all nations, death. It pictures the triumph of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. It is God who does all, and his work is complete and final. A special feature is the consummation on Mount Zion, which becomes God's throne, and from which he thereafter conducts his universal reign. But if one asks when all this will happen, the only answer is, "In that day"—that is, it will happen in the day that it happens.

The vagueness of this note of time is matched by the curious paradox of the security and steadiness of Mount Zion in the midst of a world whose foundations are trembling and in an earth that staggers like a drunken man. Scene follows scene—the shaking of the whole earth, the overthrow of cities, a divine coronation feast "in this mountain"—and the strange panorama is interspersed with songs that are to be sung "in that day."

Obscure as this is in terms of the twentieth century, it cannot be supposed that the writer intended to be so obscure that his readers would not know what he was talking about. Who those readers were may be guessed from occasional allusions. They were poor and helpless, waiting for the Lord to save them. They were an object of reproach everywhere, ready to perish, outcasts. The purpose of the writer was plainly to encourage, to sustain, to reassure the Lord's people who were in such distress. The reassurance takes two forms. In the first place, it promises the overthrow of all oppressors. This will be carried out in the most thorough fashion. It is to accomplish this that the Lord "maketh the earth empty; and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down. . . . It shall fall, and not rise again." [25]

In the second place, there is promise of unmeasured happiness for those who have been suffering so bitterly. They will share the divine coronation feast; they will be defended and protected while the Lord in his indignation "cometh out of his place to punish the in-

[25] Isa. 24:1, 20.

habitants of the earth for their iniquity." [26] They will be divinely comforted. God himself will "wipe away tears from off all faces," for death itself will be "swallowed up . . . forever";[27] and, as a hope beyond all dreaming, they are promised that "thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise." [28] Imagination could go no farther.

Not only would the writer have no intention of confusing his readers, but neither can he for a moment be supposed to have said what he himself did not believe. His language was figurative, just as all religious language must be, and the figures he used were necessarily those current in his own day. They would be as intelligible to those to whom they were addressed as the figurative language of modern gospel songs is intelligible to those who use them. His purpose was to "strengthen . . . the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees," "say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." [29] And he meant it. He wanted to kindle in other hearts the faith and hope that flamed in his own. His language may seem extravagant and obscure today, but it was not so then. And even today there shines out from those strange words and pictures something of the faith and hope that overcame that ancient world, sustaining the Lord's people through incredible hardships to be his witnesses.[30]

He wrote, of course, for his own people and his own time, to stimulate hope and courage—not to lay down literal programs. In the faith and endurance of his people he saw the fulfillment of his purpose. To take what he said as though in this late day he meant it as a description of a still-distant future is to fail utterly to see the import of his words or to catch their inspiration. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." [31] It was the group of writers to which he belonged who in large measure enabled the faithful Jews to maintain their integrity in a world that threatened to engulf them.

[26] Isa. 26:21.
[27] Isa. 25:8 (A.R.V.).
[28] Isa. 26:19 (A.R.V.).
[29] Isa. 35:3, 4.
[30] Isa. 43:12.
[31] II Cor. 3:6.

The Book of Daniel

The most familiar example of this kind of writing is the book of Daniel. It is the only complete book of this type in the Old Testament. It is a message to those who are being persecuted for righteousness' sake, recognizing their persecutions and promising them deliverance. The promised overthrow of the oppressors is to be the beginning of a new age of righteousness and happiness. It is not a general or theoretical message but is addressed to a specific situation. Its subtitle might well be "A Tract for the Times"—meaning, of course, the times in which it was written.

Its twelve chapters fall conveniently into two parts of six chapters each; but while the two parts have a common purpose, they approach it differently. They are also distinguished by a difference of language, most of the first part being written in Aramaic and most of the second part in Hebrew. According to the book, its hero, who is also its author, lived and wrote in the last years of the Exile and the years immediately following. Although the dating is not definite, his life span might be approximately 600-525 B.C.

The first part of the book gives the familiar stories that show Daniel and his three companions as embodiments of unflinching obedience to the Law, although their fidelity brings them into great danger. It also shows Daniel as an interpreter of dreams, in which capacity his success brings him great honor. These stories are about private individuals. Daniel and his companions are of no significance in Babylon; in fact, they are just four Hebrew captives who are not of any special importance even in their own country. They are presented as examples of the way men can be faithful to their religion against great odds.

In their setting and language the stories are naturally ancient and Oriental, but in their spirit and aim they are of the same type as many stories told for similar purposes today. Their purpose is further indicated by what they omit as well as by what they include. There is no discussion of the national situation of the Jews. As far as it is reflected at all, the stories suggest a friendly, or at least a bearable, relation between the Jews and the Babylonians. Political and nation-

al items are only incidental. All that matters is the triumphant fidelity to the Law that is exhibited by this little group of otherwise unimportant laymen.

The second part of the book moves in a different atmosphere. There are no more colorful stories about a faithful few, but a series of visions dealing with world empires. These visions are seen by Daniel in the days of Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. They have two outstanding characteristics. The first is the large number of symbolic scenes and figures: great beasts, rams, he-goats, horns that somehow belong to the beasts and yet somehow seem to be independent, angels, scenes in heaven. How far they stem back to ancient traditional mythologies and how far they are the invention of the writer is not clear. The second characteristic is the definite way these are shown to be symbols by the explanations that accompany them. They all represent kings and kingdoms; and the relations between them, and the way they act, are to be understood in terms of political and national persons and events.

The kings and the events can be identified when one reads the visions in the light of historic records found in other sources. The writer has portrayed four great world empires. The first three are not as fully dealt with as the fourth, which is the writer's primary concern. His references to the period in which he represents Daniel as living contain errors of fact which could not have been made by a Daniel who was on the spot. As he approaches the fourth kingdom, his descriptions are more accurate and more detailed. What he has actually done in his book is to discuss the history of his own day in the form of predictions made long before. He puts these predictions in the mouth of this Daniel. The only Old Testament mention of a Daniel outside of this book is in Ezek. 14:14, 20, where he is named between Noah and Job as one of three who evidently were proverbial in the time of Ezekiel; and in Ezek. 28:3, where his name appears as a synonym for wisdom.

The period to which the book refers, in which the writer was particularly concerned and in which he himself lived, was the one most accurately described in the visions—that of Antiochus Epiph-

anes, 175-164 B.C. It was a desperate time for the Jews. Antiochus descended on Palestine with destruction in his hand.[32] Dissensions among the Jews themselves, as well as an insurrection against Antiochus, gave him an excuse for bloody revenge, which included the desecration of the temple.[33] By fire and sword he made Jerusalem a pagan city.

His success had an unexpected result. Zeal for the Law was kindled in the hearts of the survivors. They refused to be conquered, accepting martyrdom rather than submission. It was during these terrible times that the writer of the book of Daniel, in a sublime assurance of faith, said the word that must have had its part in stirring up the faithful to their unflinching resistance. He was not speaking abstractly. He was terribly in earnest. The tragedy of his people was his own tragedy, and their hope was his hope. Among the faithful of that Maccabean age he found those who received his words as the divine encouragement he meant them to be.

It is not without significance that in subsequent years his book supplied a pattern for such later books as Enoch, Baruch, Esdras, and the New Testament book of Revelation. These also sought to reassure and encourage those who were suffering persecution and were facing martyrdom.

The Close of a Great Literature

It is not to be supposed that such writings represent the complete religion of all the Jews. Not only were they written for special times of crisis, but they would make their strongest appeal only to certain types of minds which, in times of stress and strain, were especially susceptible to messages that combined assurance with mystery. There will always be those who, like the people addressed by the writer of the book of Daniel, feel that in such writings the believer finds his chief reliance. They do not realize that such writings relate definitely to specific situations and to no others. Nor do they realize that only at one's religious peril can he disregard the pro-

[32] Dan. 11:16 (A.R.V.).
[33] Dan. 11:31.

found reflections of the wise, the ethical principles of the prophets, or the inner spiritual purity of the psalmists. These had a scope that neither the Chronicler nor the author of Daniel could claim. The two late writers, the Chronicler and the author of Daniel, brought the Old Testament to its close on a lower level than that on which the earlier writers moved. They served their purposes and made their contributions to Jewish religion, but they were moving in directions that were more and more narrow and fanciful. As far as the Old Testament was concerned, it was a good place to stop.

It was the close of a great literature whose greatness has sometimes been obscured by the veil of sanctity, authority, and mystery that has been thrown over it by a zealous but mistaken piety. But it remains a body of writings, a Scripture, in which one may find recorded some of the broadest human sympathies, the highest standards of honor, courage, and faith, the noblest aspirations, and the profoundest conceptions of God, that have ever stirred the souls of men.

Chapter IX

BACKGROUNDS OF INTERPRETATION

In the preceding discussions of biblical material certain principles have been followed which underlie all study of the Old Testament. The special student uses them so constantly that he soon takes them for granted and proceeds with his writing or teaching as though everybody knew them. There are many readers of the Old Testament, however, who are not aware of them and who are thus deprived of the results of the special studies of the last two hundred years. These principles are not obscure; and, though their application is not always simple, their main ideas are a great help to anyone interested in discovering the true character of the Old Testament.

The whole matter might be summed up in the statement that, in view of the fact that the Old Testament is a document that has come down from the past, it must be studied as all such documents are studied. Only in this way can its special character and value be established. The items that follow are some of those that underlie such a study.

Three Stages in the History of the Scriptures

Looking back over the path traveled by the Scriptures from the days of their first writing until now, one finds it is not difficult to distinguish three important although very unequal periods in their history, each period being characterized by a particular view of their nature and value.

The first period is a comparatively brief one. It is the time during which the men whose words make up the Bible were known face to face by their followers and reporters, and it extends into and perhaps somewhat beyond the next generation—that is, as long as the living memory of these teachers and leaders maintained its

characteristic influence. The contemporaries of these men knew them as neighbors and fellow citizens; and however striking or unusual the men and their messages might be, there was nothing about the men which set them apart from their fellows as far as their essential nature was concerned. They were men—great, admirable, even wonderful, perhaps, but still men.[1]

This is the period of the living word in contrast to the written word. For the ancient Hebrew—and indeed for the Oriental generally today—language was essentially oral rather than written. Western education and printing presses have developed an idea of words as something to be written and read. This idea would have been quite foreign to those who regarded writing as something mysterious and even magical. For these, words were to be spoken, heard, and remembered, rather than written, read, and filed away. The real word, the living word, was the voice of the teacher. In his absence or after his death writing was a convenient substitute as far as it went, but even then there was no hesitation in adding to such a record any additional sayings of the master which might have been stored up in the memory of writer or copyist.

This is the period in which the words of these teachers were being set down for preservation as aids to the recollection of their disciples. It is the period when Amos, Isaiah, and the prophets were uttering their flaming words, and their followers were writing what they remembered. It is the period in which Paul was writing his letters —letters which served as substitutes for his personal presence until he could again be on the ground. It is the period in which the followers of Jesus were writing down the sayings they remembered and wished to preserve, now that Jesus was no longer with them.

The essential characteristic of this period is the pervading sense of the physical presence of the living leader. Whatever else he may have been he was natural and human. The value of his words was in direct proportion to his personal influence. Just because he was human and natural, his influence was not universally convincing. There must have been many, for instance, who did not

[1] Acts 10:26.

consider the words of Jeremiah as having any special authority.[2] Paul, on his own statement, left many unconvinced.[3] Even Jesus was challenged and opposed.

This is the period when the teacher and his teachings took their place in the arena of human experience to stand or fall as they could or could not evoke the consent and loyalty of their contemporaries. They had no arbitrary or external authority to impose. They could only appeal, persuade, and convince. It is a heroic period whose great personalities were still known as men of flesh and blood, who were loved or hated by their contemporaries, and whose authority was their individual personal force and their unconquerable zeal.

The second period differs widely from the first. Its most conspicuous characteristic is the way the written words become, so to speak, depersonalized. The situation did not begin to define itself until the living contact was lost which, at first hand through contemporaries and at an attenuated second hand through the next generation, connected the leaders with their followers in terms of vital human acquaintance. It was this contact which, while it endured, subordinated the written word to the living—that is, the spoken—word. Life supplied a factor which was essential for the full significance of the message.

As the departed leaders receded further and further into the past, their figures took on heroic proportions; they were regarded more as monuments than as men, and their words were inevitably detached from conditions of time and circumstance. It was only natural, as their place and influence became increasingly important and secure with the passing of the centuries, that their later followers should glorify the only tangible heritage that had come down to them—namely, the written word.

The writings now tended to become a sort of constitutional document serving as part of the official basis of a movement which had developed into an organic institution. They took on an imper-

[2] Jer. 26.
[3] II Cor. 10.

sonal and abstract authority, and were finally regarded as a court of supreme appeal.

This process is fairly obvious, and reference to it would be quite unnecessary were it not that the documents here involved are religious documents. It is one of the paradoxes of religion that while it is inherently conservative it is constantly undergoing modifications in practice and principle, yet the principles and practices current at any particular moment are regarded as authentically and accurately representative of the original teachings of the creative leaders of the past. History shows, for instance, that the appeal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" is always made on the assumption that the faith thus appealed to is identical with the faith held by those who make the appeal. And yet if history shows anything, it shows this assumption to be in most cases erroneous.

This influence operated conspicuously on the written words coming down from the past. There is no doubt that the original leaders regarded their messages as representing the divine will, but there is just as little doubt that this conviction was by no means shared by all their contemporaries—to say nothing of the way the leaders contradicted each other in their assertions of what the divine will really was. In this second period, however, when the original factors of time, place, and personality had dropped from view, the surviving words became more real than the men who spoke them. They were no longer regarded as the utterances of human beings but as the words of God himself, and in pursuance of the principle just stated it was assumed and asserted that the words were God's words from the beginning. As such they were independent of human conditions. They became not only depersonalized but authoritatively canonized.

For most Bible readers today the Bible is still in this second period. It is a collection of sacred words, God's words, quite independent of any conditions of historic backgrounds or personal experiences. In the absence of these controls the basis of interpretation

is transferred from the early human speakers to the later human readers.

In order to use even divine words for purposes of practical application, some point of contact must be found for them in human life. As the contact with the original speakers is lost, a contact must be supplied by taking the words, apart from their origins, in terms of the ideas and outlooks held by the later readers themselves, each one adapting any particular word to his own case according to his own convictions and his interpretative ability. Because these words have thus been set adrift from their native moorings, they have floated down the stream of time only to be used as confirmations and authorizations of one religious idea after another. This is one reason why there is a history of interpretation.

This second period obviously includes nearly the whole history of the Scriptures. It can be summed up in one word, "Bible," as that word is commonly understood—namely, as a term applied to a group of writings regarded as sacred, authoritative, inerrant, separate and different from all others.

The relation of the third period to the second is similar to that of the second to the first, but in the reverse direction. As far as the Bible as a whole is concerned, no sharp line of separation can be drawn between the first and second periods. The movement was gradual, and the periods for the different books overlapped. Not only was the transition gradual in the case of any single writing, but one writing or group of writings, such as the Law in the Old Testament, might be well advanced into the second period before some other writings, such as the New Testament, had even come into existence. A similar overlapping occurs between the second and third periods.

For practical purposes the third period may be regarded as beginning approximately two hundred years ago, in 1753, when Dr. Jean Astruc opened the way to modern biblical research by his observation that different names for deity appear in the book of Genesis. This third period finds its essential characteristic in its endeavor to recover the facts of the first. It attempts to correct the

devout but erroneous views of Scripture which mark the second period, and to restore to the writings their original backgrounds of time, place, and personality.

It is obvious that this is a difficult and complicated task. Thousands of years have passed since the writings first appeared. During practically all that time they have been regarded in ways which rapidly obscured every historic background and transformed them into divine oracles, steadily increasing the difficulty of ever getting back to the original meanings. The final triumph of this devout but misleading treatment of the Scriptures came with the Reformation, when Protestants turned from the church to the Bible for their divine authority. Henceforward one who approached the Bible for any but doctrinal purposes took his life in his hands, and biblical study in any spirit but that of the second period became so difficult as to be almost impossible.

Difficult as the task has been, however, it has proceeded through these two hundred years with increasing success until it is not too much to say that the Scriptures are seen today more nearly in their original character than at any time since the close of the first century following their appearance.

It is not surprising that some of the positions reached in the third period should seem destructive. But one should ask, "Destructive of what?" They are not destructive in the slightest degree of the Bible itself nor of any of its parts. If they are destructive at all, it is only of some of the erroneous ideas about the Bible already mentioned.

Throughout the second period those ideas about the Bible were identified with the Bible itself. To touch one was to touch the other. It has even been supposed that these ideas are taught in the Bible. And one who has never distinguished between the two is naturally alarmed over what he perhaps calls "destructive criticism." His alarm would—or should—subside as soon as it is understood that the modern student is punctilious to preserve every word of the Bible, his sole aim being to discover what was written, who wrote it, and what it was intended by the writer to mean.

The idea of "cutting out" any of the Bible has no place in such an aim. The purpose is simply to understand the Bible in the light of its origins—no more, and certainly no less. And anyone who is alarmed at the outcome would be much more alarmed could he be transported back into the days when, for instance, Isaiah was preaching, and could see how freely and even flippantly his words, which today are so reverently received as Scripture, were then regarded.[4]

The Process of Translation

Before these facts, however, can mean anything to an English reader, he must be able to read the Bible in his own language. The fact that the English Bible is a translation from remote languages is so well known that it hardly seems necessary to mention it. Yet, strange to say, it is so often overlooked that many regard the translation that has been made into their own language as the original Bible. Not only are the original languages quite ignored, but the whole process of translation with all the factors that it involves is something utterly unknown. Yet the fact remains that the books of the Bible were not written in any modern language, but in languages that were used by ancient and alien peoples. Even if these books had been written today, they would still need translation, for the vast majority of the human race speaks neither Hebrew nor Greek. It should be self-evident that, unless one can read these languages, they must be translated for him.

For English-speaking people the King James Version of 1611 holds a place of authority and finality that its translators never anticipated. As soon, however, as one considers that English-speaking Christians are but a part of the great Christian movement, he realizes that the King James Version cannot be regarded in any such fashion by those who speak French or German or any other language than English. The Christians of the other nations have their own versions, in their own languages, which are as precious to them, and which are for them as authoritative and final, as the King James Version is to those who speak English.

[4] Isa. 28:9-14.

What, then, is this business of translation that is so essential if one who knows no language but his own is to read, "every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born . . . the wonderful works of God"? [5] It is hardly to be supposed that there should be a repetition of the event described in the second chapter of Acts, in which a preacher might preach in one language and his hearers hear another. Men are now dependent upon their own resources, and the Hebrew words of Isaiah or the Greek words of Paul remain unintelligible until they have been translated.

At first it might seem a comparatively simple matter, as though all one had to do—provided he knew both languages—would be to take a Hebrew sentence and say it over in English. This, however, would be possible only if the two languages were constructed on the same plan and if every word in one language had its exact counterpart in the other; but there are no languages that are as closely parallel as this. Furthermore, large numbers of words in all languages have several different meanings. The English word "fast," for example, has a whole cluster of meanings, some of which even contradict each other. The same sort of thing is true of words in other languages; and while in different languages single words may correspond, their variant meanings do not. When, for instance, in the Hebrew language, the same word is used for "spirit," "breath," "air," and "wind," or in the Greek language the same word is used for "heart," "life," "mind," and "soul," it is evident that translation cannot be a mechanical substitution of the words of one language for the words of another. For many Bible readers the word "salvation" is an important word; yet the Hebrew word commonly thus translated in the King James Version is also translated, in the same version, by the words "deliverance," "health," "help," and "welfare" —and similar examples could be indefinitely multiplied. Indeed, it is one of the first embarrassments of a student who begins to translate from any language to discover how many meanings the foreign word has. For a time he is at a loss which meaning to select.

While all this, and much more, is elementary to a student of for-

[5] Acts 2:8, 11.

eign languages, it is far from being recognized by the devout Bible reader who regards the King James Version as the original Bible; and until he realizes that his English Bible is a translation, subject to all the difficulties that beset the process of translation, he will have a mistaken idea of its general character and will fall into all sorts of misunderstandings as to its real meaning. It may not be his fault that he is unaware of these facts. The Bible may have been given to him in the first place by those who did not make the matter clear. But the heritage of ignorance is none the less tragic because it is received in innocence.

When this aspect of the translated Bible is once recognized, it opens the way to an appreciation of the profound and exacting work done by those who, by their translations, have made the Bible accessible to the multitudes who know no language but their own. It is a work of intensive scholarship that has engaged years and lifetimes of men who gave themselves to that work. The lives of Wycliffe and Tyndale tell something of what it cost to make it possible for "a boy that driveth a plough" to have in his hand a Bible that speaks his own language. It is a debt to scholarship that can never be paid, and it is most unfortunate that so many of those who are most dependent on its fruits know nothing of the men who labored and died for them.

Back of the process of translation comes the equally important question of the manuscript that is to be translated. Here again is a field in which only those qualified can operate. While there is general agreement as to the copies of the Bible that may be used as the basis of a translation, there are many places where these copies differ. Not only were all ancient documents written and copied by hand, but they are often so old that they are worn or torn or otherwise damaged, so that even where they are complete, as many are not, it is impossible to determine exactly what was written in the first place. The collection and comparison of the ancient copies of the Bible is another field in which the lay reader must depend on the work of the specialist—another one of the debts the Bible reader will never be able to pay. That there are places where it is

impossible to be sure just what was written originally is indicated in any Bible with marginal readings, in which almost every page carries its statements that the original reading might be something different from the one which now stands in the body of the page. The reason for much of this class of difficulties is, of course, the fact that the original writings have long ago disappeared, and no one knows how many copies, and copies of copies, lie between the words that Paul or Isaiah wrote and the copies from which the present-day Bibles have been made.

The existence of these facts does not make the Bible any less reliable than it has ever been, for the facts are not of modern invention—they have always been there. Ignorance of them may have given readers an idea that the words of their English Bible were the exact words that were spoken or written by the men of old, and for one who fears the truth "ignorance is bliss"; but one hesitates to make such ignorance a basis for faith.

The main point is that the English Bible, no matter in what version, is a translation, and that the King James Version is but one version among many, with no more claim to finality than any other version made by competent scholars. It is no accident but profound concern for the Bible itself that led devout English and American scholars to their careful revision of the King James Version; and still further revisions will be called for and will be made as increasing light on the whole biblical field, including language and manuscripts, makes greater accuracy possible.

Translation Is Not Enough

Translation, however, is not enough. After the manuscripts have been sifted, compared, and a final text decided upon, and after the resulting words and sentences have been accurately translated, there remains the further question: What do they mean? This is the fundamental question. It is the meaning of the Bible that gives it its value, and the discovery of the meaning is the ultimate purpose of all who use it. This discovery is not always a simple matter; the meaning does not always lie on the surface. This is true even when

the Bible is considered only as a body of documents to be translated. When the real meaning is sought, additional factors appear that carry the process beyond translation.

Wonderful as language is as a means of communication, it has its limitations. A word is but a counter, a tag, a label which serves as a sort of pushbutton to bring ideas to attention. The word "music," for instance, has quite different meanings for different people. They use the same word, but the word serves each one as a tag or label for his own particular conception of music—what he thinks of as, and calls, music. Back of the word lies the whole experience of the person using it—his domestic and social environment, his education and training, his interests, and his individual temperament. All this is implicit, not only in the word "music," but in any word he uses; and without some knowledge of these underlying facts the idea suggested by the word must remain more or less indefinite, failing to that extent to convey the exact idea the speaker has in mind.

Words alone cannot tell the whole story; their proper interpretation depends on more than themselves. For ordinary conversation as carried on by people who speak the same language and who live in the same country, the dangers of misunderstanding are negligible. The backgrounds which all have in common are taken for granted —they "go without saying." But even in such situations, the more significant the word, or rather the more significant the idea under discussion, the more necessary it becomes to define the words used and to guard against misunderstandings. And if this is necessary among people who live in the same time and place, it is much more so when the words used come from a foreign language and rest back upon habits of life and upon views of man, of the world, and of God as remote as those of the Bible and of Bible times are from those of the present day.

This principle of interpretation is involved in all language. It is not peculiar to the Bible, nor is the Bible exempt from its application. Wherever language is used, it must be taken into account. Language alone is not sufficient; translation alone is not sufficient;

interpretation must always be invoked—unconsciously in ordinary conversation, consciously when one is dealing with subjects of importance, especially when these come from foreign and remote backgrounds. It is for this reason that modern translations may be misleading. The more familiar an English word, the more immediately it calls up the ideas associated with it in its current use; yet the very familiarity of the word tends to give the impression that its present associations are the same as those of the ancient original, and this impression may be quite erroneous.

The proper meanings of any writings are the meanings, the ideas, the writer intended to convey. He used language in the same way his contemporaries did, as all language is used. Had he not done so, he would have been unintelligible; for this "way" involves the principle of interpretation according to which the writer's backgrounds are inherent in all that he writes. It is these backgrounds that determine the sense, the meanings, of what he says. The simple and obvious fact that the Bible is not all written in the same language throughout is a sufficient indication that it is to be understood in terms of the languages used.

There is a whole group of words for which translation is not enough, and which without correct interpretation may be quite misleading. It includes any word that stands for an idea which is highly important but has different meanings at different times. This group includes words of profoundest religious significance. Of these probably the most important is the word "God." The idea one has of God, whatever it may be, is central and determinative for one's religion. Any thoughtful religious person knows how his own ideas of God have changed through the years.

The word "God" is the general term for the central reality of religion, and yet the differences are inconceivably wide among the ideas of those who use the word. As long as this fact is recognized, it causes no confusion; but when it is overlooked, when the word is supposed to have the exactness of a mathematical formula meaning the same thing always and everywhere, confusion inevitably results. Perhaps the case is not quite as bad as it might seem at first,

for as a matter of fact at any one time and among the people of any one group the word has a general reference sufficiently accepted to serve for general purposes, regardless of the differences which careful definition would immediately reveal.

When once these facts of language and experience are recognized it is clear that the word "God," when it is found in the Bible, cannot escape their influence. There, as elsewhere, the word is a sign or symbol of whatever idea the writer or speaker had in mind. One man thought of God as cruel; another thought of him as loving. One thought of him as concerned with all the paraphernalia of an elaborate ritual; another thought of him as scorning such things. One thought of him as dwelling in a certain place; another thought of him as everywhere. Such differing conceptions can be understood only when they are interpreted in the light of factors that lie beyond the scope of a single word. Translation is not enough. The meaning of a word is determined by what lies back of it, and it is those backgrounds that supply the essential materials for the interpretation without which the true meaning cannot be found.

In view, then, of the fact that the Bible comes from men of different backgrounds, personalities, and experiences, care must be taken, when such a word as "God" is used, to interpret it in its proper setting, permitting it to stand for the idea of God held by the person who used it, and not attributing to it different ideas of God held by others. The necessity for such discrimination finds a good illustration in Job 42:8, where there is a reference to what Job and his three friends had said about Jehovah. Job, it is said, was right and his friends were wrong. Evidently the fact that both these statements about God are "in the Bible" does not mean that they are equally true. At least the writer did not mean them to be taken that way.

Translators have been almost forced to become interpreters in dealing with this word. The modern use of capital letters gives quite a different meaning to "God" and "god." In the days when the Bible was written there were no small letters; all were capitals; so that, for instance, in Dan. 3:29, where the word appears twice, it

would have been written both times "GOD" and not, as now in some English translations, "God" the first time and "god" the second time. The capital letter in English constitutes an interpretation indicating that the translators did not want to leave to the English reader his own choice of meanings for the word. While the word "God" is the most conspicuous one of this group, such words as "sin," "salvation," "holiness," "righteousness," and many others must have the same principle of interpretation applied to them if they are to convey to the modern reader the idea that was in the mind of the Bible writer.

Another group of words that can be utterly misleading unless they are understood in the light of their ancient backgrounds includes terms referring to the world as it was then supposed to be. These words have to do not only with the heavens, the earth, and the waters under the earth, but with the physical nature of man, health and disease, causes and control of natural phenomena, and such matters. On all these subjects the men of old time had definite ideas and held them as confidently as men hold such ideas today. They were as sure that the earth was flat as men now are sure that it is round. They were as sure that the sun rose and passed over an unmoving earth each day as men are now that the sun appears when the earth turns on its axis. They were as sure that evil spirits caused disease as men are now that disease is caused by germs.

It was in that world that men believed all sorts of things could happen in independence of any laws of gravity, electricity, or other natural causes which today are known to be involved in all occurrences in the physical world. They knew nothing of these later discoveries and had to account for their experiences on other grounds —grounds which for them were quite adequate. Their God was thought of as a being who did such things, and the world was thought of as a place in which such things could be done. If their language is to convey their ideas faithfully, it must be interpreted in terms of the views and experiences which their world reflected. Life precedes language, and language is used in harmony with the

life of which it forms a part. The language of any particular people and period is inseparable from its time and place. This means that if the Bible is to be understood and its true—that is, its original—meaning found, it must be read as a reflection of the world in which it had its origin—not only that world of time and place, but that world of ideas and points of view. The Bible must be permitted to be at home in its own world.

While all this may seem rather simple and obvious as a matter of principle in dealing with ancient documents, the difficulty of making a practical application of this principle in the interpretation of the Bible is not easily overcome. Although the Bible arose in the course of history, it has been divorced from history by the majority of those who use it for religious purposes. Although it is written in human languages, the facts of language and principles of translation and interpretation essential to all language have been overlooked or denied. What has happened is that many Bible readers today have simply substituted their own personal equations for the personal equations of the original writers, which, in the supposed interest of religion, the modern readers have tacitly suppressed. This is perhaps the chief reason why so many different sects have arisen, all basing their beliefs on a Bible which they regard as immune from the influence of human factors; unconscious of the operation of these factors upon themselves, they have produced as many interpretations of the Bible as the types of mind they themselves represent. When Mrs. Eddy says that Eve is "error," or Dr. C. I. Scofield says that Eve is a symbol of the church, neither is concerned with historical backgrounds, nor does either raise a question as to the purpose and meaning of the writer of the early chapters of Genesis. The biblical statements are simply pressed into the service of the particular religious theories these teachers hold. It is themselves, not the Bible, that they are "interpreting." This sort of thing does not deserve to be called biblical interpretation. It is at best arbitrary accommodation, and at its worst a grotesque distortion. It is useless to tell these people that their views are not biblical; they believe that they are. They cannot see that the conception of

the Bible which, they believe, gives the Bible its unique place and power has deprived them of the only control which can defend it from becoming a prey to these arbitrary uses of it.

Interpretation is necessary and inevitable. The choice is not between interpretation and no interpretation, but between an interpretation based on the facts of language and of history and one determined by interests quite apart from any desire or attempt to find out what the Bible writers were really saying and meaning. A case of special difficulty is that of the name by which the Hebrews called their national deity. In the early days and for a long time afterward they believed their own deity to be theirs in an exclusive sense, in the same way that the Philistines or Egyptians or Babylonians believed their deities to be all their own. In order to identify these different deities it was necessary that each should have his own name. The word printed "LORD" (each letter a capital) in the King James Version and the word "Jehovah" in the American Standard revision both stand for the word used by the Hebrews as the name of their national deity, the God of Israel. Both these words "LORD" and "Jehovah" are to be distinguished from "God," the general term for any deity, whether that of Israel or of any other nation, and from "Lord" (only the initial a capital), which is used of a superior, whether a master, noble, or deity, or even as a word of polite address. In the original Hebrew manuscripts, which were written in consonants only, the consonants JHVH were used to spell the Hebrew name of this national deity. Its correct pronunciation has been a subject of much study. The most widely held view is that it was "Yah-weh."[4] A good illustration of the need for discrimination

[4] That the letters *J* and *V* originally had the sounds now represented in English by *Y* and *W* respectively is known to every student of Latin, and it was through Latin that Hebrew names reached English. It is generally believed that the corresponding Hebrew consonants had similar sounds at the time the name was in use. The vowel sounds are taken from the Hebrew verb "to be," from which the divine name, according to Exod. 3:14, was taken. The vowels in "Jehovah" are not the original ones but are the vowels of the Hebrew word for "Lord," which the Jews used, and still use, for the divine name itself. The word "Jehovah," invented sometime in the Middle Ages, is thus an artificial combination of two Hebrew words, the consonants of one having been combined with the vowels of the other.

between these words is in I Kings 18:20-40, where Baal is the god of one group and Jahveh is the god of Elijah. The word "god" applies to both, but one deity has the name Baal, and the other the name Jahveh.

The Importance of Literary Forms

The correct understanding of single words and phrases is not the only guide to biblical interpretation. The larger field of literary forms is equally important. Printing devices appropriate to form and sense are a modern invention to which a modern reader is so accustomed that he is unconscious of the aid they contribute to his understanding of what he is reading. But while this is taken for granted in modern books, it is far from being accepted in the case of the Bible. To print the Bible as modern books are printed gives the page an appearance so different from the familiar chapter-and-verse arrangement that many Bible readers feel it to be a willful tampering with sacred material. They would escape this feeling in some measure if the Bible were read to them aloud—that is, if they listened to it rather than looked at it. It would then not have the appearance of rigid prose which the chapters and verses now give it, but would be heard as it really is: as narrative, exhortation, vision, poem, prayer, or whatever the passage might be. But this procedure is not usually convenient. The Bible has become a book to be seen and read rather than a story to be heard, as most of it was originally. Hence if one reading it wishes to recognize its true literary character a certain amount of mental readjustment is necessary. There is no doubt that the Bible was written in these forms; and if one is to use it intelligently, he will not only identify the forms but take account of their relation to the writer's purpose.

This last statement calls for some emphasis. The literary study of the Bible is sometimes presented as though it were a sort of game in which one identifies different passages as poems, parables, proverbs, and so forth. This identification is quite necessary, but it stops short of the goal, which is to see how directly these forms are related to the interest and purpose of the original speaker or writer,

how they reveal his point of view and help to make his message clear. If, for instance, a biblical passage is a poem, it is not enough to recognize it as such and to interpret it with due regard for the imaginative and rhetorical characteristics which make poetry so different from prose in both form and spirit. Back of the poem one must seek the poet himself, and his word must be recognized as the utterance of someone whose interest and purpose, as far as that particular passage is concerned, were those of a poet. His message is a poet's message. He saw the large imaginative aspects of his subject. He was not concerned with literal exactness. He was aware of significances that lie beyond facts. And in lines that are always pictorial and often highly figurative he portrayed some scene, event, person, or idea. He did this not only as the response of his own spirit to his subject, but also as an inspiration to others to see what he had seen and to feel what he had felt. The poetic form thus leads back to the man who used it, indicating both his attitude and his purpose.

In this way the literary form contributes some of the most important factors in the understanding of a scripture passage. These factors constitute the basis of any valid interpretation, and it is evident that the validity of any interpretation is seriously endangered if they are left out of account. A convenient illustration is the great poem that now stands in Exod. 15:1-18, as compared with the prose account that immediately precedes it. Both deal with the same subject. The prose account tells what happened, and the poem tells how some great soul felt about it. The literary differences between the passages indicate plainly the different ways they are to be understood, and the different purposes which inspired them—purposes which animated the authors and led them to write in this way.

The same kind of significance appears in any of the prose forms. One who wrote the laws in Leviticus or the extended genealogies of First Chronicles was obviously making no appeal to the emotions or the imagination. His interest was in the record, and he compiled his material for purposes of reference. The question of who might

consult his work was to him a matter of indifference. In contrast to this impersonal type are the many accounts of persons and events told in a way to enlist the interest and sympathy of the hearer. Many of the incidents told in this way have no important historical bearing. The course of Hebrew history would have been the same with them or without. But they are vividly told and have all the characteristics of the tales told among all peoples about persons or events whose memories they cherish.

As with poems, so with these prose narratives the recognition of literary characteristics is necessary but not sufficient. One must go back of the tale to the person who told it, recognizing the fact that he told it because he was interested in it and wanted others to be interested too. That is why he gave so many little personal details and items of purely human interest. He stood somewhere between the recorder and the poet, using some of the facts of the one with some of the intensity of the other. He was that kind of man, much more concerned with intriguing accounts of individuals than with carefully sifted records or calmly weighed judgments of large historical moment.

The literary form, then, gives information concerning the spirit and purpose of the writer himself, and in so doing becomes an invaluable aid to the reader whose first aim is to understand the full significance of what was written. The principle applies to all the biblical literature, and where the literary form cannot be determined with certainty the interpretation is to that extent precarious.

Dramatization

There remains one further literary aspect of these writings which is as important as it is characteristic—their dramatic character. This refers more to method than to form. In the sense that the word has in classical literature there are no full-length dramas in the Bible. The book of Job approaches this form but stops far short of it. It is a dramatic poem, or a collection of several dramatic poems, rather than a true drama. By the term "dramatic," as here used,

is meant a literary method in which persons, events, conversations, are portrayed as though the reader himself were present hearing and seeing what goes on. In the use of this method the author himself does not appear. He takes his place alongside the reader and supplies no more than is necessary to make the situation clear. He names the speakers, indicates the actions, and sets down conversations, doing this in a way that leaves him quite out of the picture. He tells his story as though he, like his reader, were an eyewitness, observing the whole procedure as it occurs. His writing has a vividness that almost gives the impression of the work of a modern reporter describing a situation at first hand. That this impression is misleading, however, is obvious when it is recognized that many of these dramatic passages deal with matters which, in the nature of the case, the writer could not have witnessed, and with events that could not have happened in just the way he describes. When, for instance, the opening verses of the book of Judges picture Hebrew tribes as individuals talking with each other, and when it is noted that the writer was evidently living a century or two afterward, when Jerusalem had come into the possession of the Hebrews, it is clear that instead of describing a past event as a modern historian would he has dramatized his material, personifying the tribes, describing their acts as though they were individuals, and even supplying dialogue for the occasion.

One consequence of the use of this dramatic method has had profound influence on the traditional conception of the Bible. The opening verses of the book of Judges again offer a convenient illustration. In those verses the author has not only personified the tribes, setting down as any dramatist would what he represents them as saying to each other, but introduced into this action the Lord himself, who takes his part in conversation with the tribes thus personified. Tradition has so long termed the whole Bible "the Word of God" that it is not to be wondered at that many a reader accepts without reflection such words as are here ascribed to the Lord as words which the Lord actually uttered in the hearing of the writer, and which the writer simply recorded verbatim. Such

an idea might have some plausibility if it could be supposed that the author were in the same way reporting what his idealized tribes said. But with these tribes so obviously personifications, and their words so clearly words in which the author has dramatized his understanding of the negotiations the tribes carried on among themselves, it is impossible to regard the words ascribed to the Lord as anything other than the author's dramatization of his own understanding of what the Lord's will was in that distant time. According to his best knowledge and belief the tribes he mentions organized their invasion of the Promised Land and, also according to his best knowledge and belief, consulted the Lord and were given divine direction, although just how the Lord was consulted is not indicated. The facts that the author lived so long after the events referred to, and that his personifications and dialogue are dramatizations picturing his thought of what happened so long before his day, make it clear that his representation of the Lord is part of the same dramatization, and that the words ascribed to the Lord are just as much the words of the author as the words he ascribes to Israel and Judah.

This does not mean that there was no negotiation between the tribes, nor that a divine oracle was not consulted. On the contrary, it would be very surprising if both were not done. The point is, however, that tribal negotiations and consultation of an oracle would be carried on according to the customs of the period concerned. These customs may well have obtained in the days when the author was writing, but he was not concerned with matters of this kind. He desired to state as concisely as possible his conception of the history he was dealing with, and he did it as any other Hebrew would have done it, dramatizing the situation as he believed it to have been. The literary form makes quite clear that the words of the Lord, which take their place in the picture as a whole, have the same kind of validity that the rest of the dialogue has. This means that any dramatic passage must be understood as one in which an author has thrown his idea into dramatic form and in that form has stated his conception of the matter in hand.

All this would involve no special difficulty were it not for the fact that it is ignored where the Bible is concerned. The frequent occurrence of "the Lord said," "thus saith the Lord," and many similar expressions is taken to mean that these are divine words literally reported. This is just what they cannot be; the forms of speech forbid it. They are the words of writers who used this method of expressing their own beliefs regarding the part taken by the Lord in the events they were describing. Their own beliefs must be taken into account because, as has already been indicated, very different conceptions of God are represented in the Bible, and a writer who dramatized his God necessarily portrayed him, his acts, and his words, in harmony with the conception which that writer himself held. There can be no question but that he portrayed the human participants in this way. It could only be according to his best knowledge and belief that he said whatever he had to say about man or God; and when he dramatized an event in which he believed both to be involved, the words and acts he ascribed to them necessarily represented them as he believed them to be.

So "the Lord said" and similar expressions must mean what they meant to the writer who used them; and to use them as though they mean or might mean something else is to violate those principles of interpretation without which language, including the language of the Bible, can have no definite meaning.

Chronology of Events

Finally, a word must be said concerning biblical chronology. The interest in exact dates is so characteristic of the Western mind that one naturally desires to work out a calendar for the Old Testament. There is just one good reason why this is such an intricate problem, and that is that materials for it are lacking because the Hebrews themselves were not interested in it. While there are many exact numbers in the Old Testament which seem to offer reliable information, this appearance is deceptive. For instance, the fifth chapter of Genesis offers an impressive list of men who lived before the Flood, giving their ages at the birth of a son and at death. In

the Samaritan Pentateuch and in the Septuagint these numbers differ by many years, making it impossible to decide which was original, to say nothing of the further questions as to the probability or reliability of any such records coming from such an ancient time as before the Flood, and of their preservation during the long period and the varied experiences intervening between that ancient time and the writing of the book of Genesis.

One of the most familiar numbers whose exactness is only apparent is the number forty. It occurs with surprising frequency, as a glance at a concordance will show. In almost every case it is a round number, evidently not intended to be taken with arithmetical exactness, but used in a general way for a conventional generalization. This appears clearly in the way the expression "forty years" is used as equivalent to a generation. But periods of forty days are also mentioned frequently enough to show that, with days as with years, no attempt is being made to be chronologically exact.

Furthermore, even if these exact numbers of days and years were accurate, they would be of little or no help in working out a chronology, because of the obvious fact that no definite year is established from which to count. Without a definite starting point one gets nowhere in a matter of this kind, and the Bible offers no point of reference from which to move. Even if one should choose some late date and try to work back toward a beginning, there are too many gaps in the line and too many discrepancies between old manuscripts to make a continuous record possible. The books of Kings come the nearest to any systematic plan of giving dates; but even here not only are the first kings—Saul, David, and Solomon—assigned the familiar forty years each, but the attempt to fix Saul's first year fails because there is no point of reference. Not the least amazing example of this lack of interest in any developed time scheme is in the first nine chapters of First Chronicles, where genealogical lists are given which extend from Adam down past the Babylonian exile, yet without the mention of a single date!

It is hard to suppose that, if the Hebrews had been really interested in chronology, they would not have found some method of record-

ing it. But the fact is that the Old Testament lacks any such method and that, while its relative dates indicate the probable order in which events happened, its lack of any fixed point to which all dates could be referred makes it necessary to call in the aid of records of other nations where some point of contact makes more exact dating possible.

The dates which some unknown authority inserted in reference editions of the King James Version of the Bible are the work of Archbishop Ussher and were published in 1650-54. He did not go outside the Bible for his data; and his conclusions, which have long been disproved, are a good illustration of the utter inadequacy of the biblical material for chronological purposes. It is unfortunate that his dates are still widely used, for by the aid of nonbiblical material there has been worked out a more accurate chronology that reaches as far back as the days of David. Beyond that the chronology is uncertain.

Chronology of the Literature

The problem of dating the events in the Old Testament is closely paralleled by a similar difficulty in dating the literary materials that make up the Old Testament itself. Just as the Bible is not a single book but a collection of many books coming from different authors, dates, and backgrounds, it is now recognized that most of these so-called books are, so to speak, little Bibles in the sense of being not single books but collections of literary materials coming, in their turn, from different authors, dates, and backgrounds.

The composite character of the books appears in various ways. It appears in repetitions, either on a large scale as in Kings and Chronicles, or on a smaller scale as in II Sam. 22 and Psalm 18, or even in single verses as in I Sam. 6:14, 15. It appears also in the interweaving of different narratives about the same subject, as in the story of the Flood in Gen. 7, or in the Midianite and Ishmaelite versions of the way Joseph got to Egypt in Gen. 37. It appears in contradictions like the one between I Kings 22:43 and II Chron. 17:6, or between II Sam. 24:1 and I Chron. 21:1, and many other

places. There are also many differences in the use of words, as in the different names for deity in Psalms 14 and 53. These and other literary differences are so numerous that some analysis is imperative if the Old Testament is really to be understood.

Such an analysis has been carried on acutely and persistently until it might almost be said that a new Old Testament has emerged or, if not just that, at least that the results of the literary analysis have thrown such a flood of light on the Old Testament that it is now seen in its true character with a clarity impossible until comparatively recent years. Passages separated in fact by centuries no longer have to be read as though they were united and continuous just because they happen to fall within the same chapter. Ideas of God quite at variance with each other no longer have to be harmonized just because they are attributed to someone whose name stands in the title of a book. The old familiar unities of the books as books have been transformed into new unities that cut across the boundaries of books and reveal themselves as literary products of the religious movements that gave the Hebrew religion its form and content and left as its literary deposit the Old Testament. The passages which separate themselves under this analysis are not random fragments gathered promiscuously from here and there, but passages which show a surprising coherence and inner unity. They build themselves into such consistent groups that, after their characteristics have once been noted, they can usually be identified even in an English version.

Out of these facts there has come a chronology of the literature which is not so much concerned with the exact dating of individual books as with the assignment of the literary materials of which a book is composed to the historical periods and situations out of which the various materials arose and which they reflect. The history of the events and the history of the literature are parts of the same story. The events produced the literature, the literature recorded and interpreted the events, and the literature fulfills its purpose when it enables readers in these latter days to recover the events that lay behind it.

Chapter X

THE LIVING VOICE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The method of Bible study now generally pursued no longer needs to defend itself. It is firmly established, and it has come to stay. While it is true that for years to come "evolution" and "higher criticism" will be shibboleths of Satan in the minds of some earnest readers of the Bible, it is increasingly evident that the biblical work of the last two hundred years has gradually extended its influence so widely and so thoroughly that those who still rally to the ancient standards of verbal inspiration and cover-to-cover belief are enlisted in a lost cause.

The movement has been a slow one and has been attended with much deplorable controversy. In the early days it took much deeper conviction and much more courage than it does now to maintain the positions that seemed at first so destructive. Now that they have been so long before the public and have been submitted to such uncompromising examination it is easy to see that unless they had been securely based on the Bible itself they would never have survived. This stage of the journey is practically complete. It is recognized that the Bible is to be understood in the light of its history and of its literary character. Literary forms in the Bible have been identified, documents distinguished, customs studied, characters and events dated, until it would seem that every possible step had been taken to enable the student to reach the heart of the Bible itself and to see its every aspect in the clearest light. Logically the only step remaining is the one leading directly into that world of the spirit whence the Bible came.

When this point is reached, however, a situation appears which often leads to severe criticism of the whole process. This criticism is directed against the result to which the study sometimes leads—namely, a cooling of one's original enthusiasm for the Bible itself,

a failure to find in the restudied Scriptures the power and inspiration which, according to tradition, the fathers always found. Those who object to the modern movement welcome this result as convincing evidence against it.

The reason for this unfortunate situation is a failure to realize that the Bible is not primarily an object for doctrinal manipulation nor for scientific analysis, but that it is the report and product of those spiritual experiences which give the Hebrew race a unique place in the history of the world. If the Bible as used by the conservative often seems dry, and if as used by the liberal it often seems cold, the reason is not far to seek. It is because both are more concerned with the slogans of their respective schools than with the enduring life out of which the Bible came, and which it may still evoke. The Bible has become for both more like a dead letter than a living spirit.

Although some conservatives and some liberals are close together in this respect, they are far apart in another; and in this other respect the conservative has at first a real advantage. The traditional view of the Scriptures has been held in substantially the same form for two thousand years, and it was not generally questioned until the emergence in the last century of historical Bible study. This means, in the first place, that down to the present moment religious ideas have been expressed almost exclusively in terms of that traditional view. It means further that they have been embedded deeply in the whole scheme of traditional Christian thought. Christianity and the Scriptures have been so inseparably interwoven as to make it inevitable that all statements of Christian thought and all discussions of the Christian life should tend to perpetuate the traditional view of the Scriptures upon which they were based.

In the second place, there are not many among those who have moved over toward the historical position who were not first inoculated with the traditional virus. These face a twofold difficulty: not only must they build up the new structure of biblical knowledge and point of view, but they must also get the old one out of the way.

This latter operation is usually more delicate and more difficult than the former. Although one may wholeheartedly intend to move toward the historical point of view, it is only after years of resolute association with it that he slowly begins to have the same freedom and spontaneity in his use of the Bible that he had when he formerly used it in the traditional way. That traditional way has been bred in him from the first day that he took up the Bible. His mind runs not to the contrary. The old thought and feeling haunt him at every turn, and he asks himself, long before he has material upon which to base an answer, "Where will all this lead?"

A man attempting to work in any new field will always be at a disadvantage until he has mastered his material so thoroughly that he can give his attention wholly to the thing to be done rather than to the technique of the process. Until he can shift gears without stopping too long to think what comes next, he is only learning to drive. Those brought up in the traditional view, whether they hold it now or not, can usually manipulate the traditional material with ease and freedom; but there are many who, with the best will in the world trying to find their way about in the new field, are only, so to speak, learning to drive. They have not yet sufficient command of the new material to use it with unconscious control. This kind of difficulty is a stage inseparable from any progress. Here, as in so many undertakings, it is only those who endure to the end that are saved. While an approach to the Bible which opens the way to its very heart and life should certainly not stop short of the final recreative touch of power that makes the Old Testament come alive, it should be equally clear that this power cannot be seen and felt until the student is as thoroughly familiar and at ease with the new material as his forefathers were with the old. Those who have lived long enough with the historical study of the Old Testament to be at home in it know that, so far from dissipating or obscuring religious values, that study gives those values their true vitality and significance. In a way and to a degree impossible before, the limitations of time, of place, and of earthly circumstance fall away,

and one becomes aware of the timeless, universal aspiration of the heart of man for fellowship with God which has found its record nowhere so clearly as here. It is through this historical study that the student learns to distinguish between the ancient accidents of language, customs, and belief and the enduring principles, motives, and aims that underlie all strivings and aspirations of the human spirit.

The necessity of permitting the Old Testament to be at home in its own world has already been pointed out. Necessary as that is, however, it is not the whole story. It is equally necessary to understand that ancient world in the light of the world as it is known today. While it may readily be granted that far more is to be learned about the world than has yet been discovered, it can hardly be doubted that far more is known about it now than was known two thousand years or more ago.

What the world is now, it was then. If the ancient writers saw it otherwise, that was only because in their day that was as far as they could see. It is inevitable that they should have believed some things that have no place in the world as it is now known to be. The prophets, priests, wise men, psalmists, and the people generally accepted their world as it was currently understood, and the writers wrote without the slightest suspicion that the current view was not wholly correct. Fortunately it is not necessary to make the present view of the world fit into that ancient picture which, while true in some respects, was very wrong in others. To attempt this would only force religion into intellectual confusion in an effort to adjust faith in a world that is no more to facts of the world in which the believer now actually lives.

Gravitation was not suddenly invented and made operative in the days of Sir Isaac Newton. If King Solomon had had cameras and films, the action of light would have wrought the wonder of photography as reliably then as now. As far as physical conditions are concerned, antiseptics, anesthetics, and inoculations are no more effective now than they would have been in the days of Moses. And

certainly the earth was round and in motion even if the ancients did not know it and thought that "it should not be moved forever."[1]

Miracles and Legends

If, however, the world was the same then as it is now, how should one understand the many events in the Old Testament which do not fit into the modern picture, and which, if they happened as described, have no place in the world that has since been revealed by astronomy and physics? In any other ancient document than the Old Testament such a situation would hardly call for comment. It raises questions here only because there has been thrown about the Old Testament a veil of mystery that has successfully excluded it from its place in the historic—that is, the divine—order. This mystery has carried with it, among other things, the familiar idea that the Old Testament is accurate and authoritative throughout. The idea may well be termed a mystery because it is one which the Old Testament neither claims nor confirms. It is a theory based on considerations that lie outside the Old Testament. Its assumption that the Old Testament can be dealt with as a whole is sufficient evidence that it could not have arisen until the Old Testament had been completed. It grew out of the devout discussion and speculation that, seeking an outward and visible sign of divine authority, found it in the sacred writings. The actual contents of the writings were ignored, their origins were unknown, and even had they been known would have been considered irrelevant. The mysterious quality, once affirmed, was easily accepted by minds accustomed to find mysteries everywhere, and it has continued to the present day.

Today where this mystery, the theory of divine accuracy, is confronted with descriptions of physical facts that just do not happen, a contradiction appears that brings to many earnest Bible readers both perplexity and dismay. They ask how this contradiction can be resolved. The traditional answer has been, "Call these events mir-

[1] Ps. 104:5 (A.R.V.).

acles and accept them on faith." But this is too simple. A problem is not solved simply by giving it a label, and the fact that this problem has not been solved in this way is seen in the endless discussions about miracles.

These events were not always so perplexing. They were quite credible when they were first told; they were also credible through the subsequent ages during which ancient ideas about the world still persisted; and they are even credible today to hosts of people who see no connection between "the Bible world" and the world as the geographer, the astronomer, and the physicist have made it known. They are also credible in a tremulous way to many who know the world too well to question the facts of physics, but who are too devout to dare to question anything that has been "said to them of old time." The confused state of mind that this involves is accepted as one of the obligations of faith. But this confusion is not necessary. It honors neither God nor man. The issue raised by these so-called miracles is a false issue and calls for clarification.

The word "miracle" as generally understood implies a contrast between the event to which it is applied and those orderly processes commonly called laws of nature. The miracle may be thought of as breaking those laws or as the operation of a higher law as yet unknown, but some relation to these laws is always in the background. Yet a conception of nature which regards the world as an integrated whole whose procedures are discoverable, a world in which any cause leads reliably and always to the same effect, a world in which an atom and a solar system are but fellow travelers in an ordered universe, is far from the world as men believed it to be in the days of the Old Testament. In those times and for long afterward the world was thought of as controlled not by impersonal laws but by personal and near-personal powers of varying scope and sway. Many people still think of the world in these terms. Even when the Hebrews reached the high level of monotheism the principle was not changed. All power and control were simply transferred to the one sole deity.

Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that hath he done,
In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps;
Who causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;
Who maketh lightnings for the rain;
Who bringeth forth the wind out of his treasuries.[2]

This is simply a poetic statement of the universal belief that events in the world were controlled directly by God himself and not by impersonal laws that operated independently. From this point of view anything could happen without disturbing a universal principle. No law of nature was involved, because there was no idea of an independent "nature," and so of course there were no "laws" to be considered.

The first step, then, if the word "miracle" is to be used, is to release it from its relation to nature and laws of nature in the modern sense. The word itself invites this, for the Latin word from which it comes means simply a "wonder," or something to be wondered at. This is the meaning of "miracle" when it appears in English translations of the Old Testament; it refers only to something wonderful, surprising, unusual. The Hebrew words that refer to these unusual events mean simply "sign" or "wonder," but imply nothing relative to the modern miracle idea. There is no Hebrew word for this idea; the idea itself did not exist in Old Testament times.[3]

The idea of the supernatural, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, belongs in a similar category. It should be obvious that, until there was a conception of nature and the natural to start with, there could be no idea of a supernature or supernatural. When God himself was regarded as the prime mover in all events, there could be no place for a separate or inferior nature; deity alone was both source and controller of all things, incorporating in himself all that was later to be ascribed to the idea of nature. The later—much later—distinction between God and nature did not exist and could not un-

[2] Ps. 135:6-7 (A.R.V.).

[3] The occasional use of the word "miracle" in the King James Version is both misleading and inconsistent, for words sometimes translated "miracle" are also translated "mark," "sign," "token," "wonder," "marvelous thing."

til the nature idea had arisen to become, as one might say, a competitor of the Almighty.

The fact remains, however, that these remarkable events are in the Old Testament. They were seriously and sincerely recorded, and they had their place in the Old Testament world. The question must be asked, "How are they to be regarded today?" The answer is to be found in the Old Testament world where they arose, and in whose terms they must be understood. Their background is not that of painstaking research for purposes of accurate record. Their purpose was quite different. This appears in the fact that these events are always associated with some great person. They reflect the fame and glory ascribed to these persons by later generations. Of course if those persons had not been important in their own day, events of this sort would never have been told about them; but with their importance once established, they inevitably attracted and inspired narratives that reflected their later fame.

This is the well-known legend-making process which operates as universally today as it did in antiquity. "Legend, as the name implies, is what will be read by successive ages into an event or record of the past. . . . Great events . . . have a posthumous story of their own, each period pouring its own inner life into the patient and pliant texts of old." [4] It is in this category that the accounts of these remarkable events belong. They have nothing to do with miracles, as that term is now commonly used. They were marvelous, unusual, impressive, but they involved no conflict with what was regarded as possible and credible in the world as it was then understood. They created no intellectual confusion in the minds of the hearers, for they were quite congenial to the conception of the world in which they believed themselves to be living.

This agreement of the events with the world view of their day is one of the points where the modern confusion about miracles arises. Legends often arise in modern times about famous characters and are readily believed. No question is raised as to the possibility of their occurrence for the very important reason that they involve

[4] Shalom Spiegel in the *New York Times*, August 21, 1938.

nothing which is inconsistent with the ideas of the constitution and operation of the world in which they are told. They may be remarkable and unusual, but they are not felt to be impossible.

A good illustration is the familiar story about George Washington and the cherry tree. Its legendary character has long been recognized, but it survives because it falls within the scheme of what is currently accepted as possible. While it may be unusual to find small boys that are such paragons of integrity as the young George, it is not wholly impossible. And George grew up to be such a great man that it would seem quite natural for some of that later greatness to crop out in his youth. So the story is believed and treasured. It glorifies the great man and harmonizes with the world view of its time.

If, however, a similar story had been told in ancient times about a Gideon or a Samson, the ethical integrity motive would not have fitted the situation. The ancients knew better ways of indicating anticipations of greatness. One fancies that they would have told how the youthful hero heard his father coming and then that "he put forth his hand and touched the stump of the cherry tree which he had cut down; and lo, the tree that had been cut down was restored as it had been at the first." The father would have had no cause for complaint, and the hero would have had his way. A story like this would have been as credible and as convincing in ancient times as the story about George Washington is today. Both stories would satisfy the essential conditions of legends in glorifying the great man in a way that harmonizes with the world in which the story is told.

These stories have another point in common. Neither the ancient one nor the modern one would have come from an eyewitness. There is no evidence that the accounts of the Old Testament wonders were set down on the spot. As compared with the times of the persons and events with which it deals, the whole Old Testament is comparatively late. It is in large part a treasury of oral traditions, and the narratives that were finally written down were no more, and of course no less, than the forms in which they were current at the time of the writing. Tales of great men do not necessarily go back to the

great man's own days any more than the cherry tree story goes back to the days of George Washington.

As soon as it is recognized that narratives of this type are not histories but legends, and that legends necessarily belong in the world in which they arise, it must be obvious how utterly illogical it is to take one of them out of its own world and then proceed to test it and evaluate it in terms of another. For instance, only in a world where it was supposed that the sun moved over the earth each day could the sun be commanded to stand still.[5] No question would arise as to what might happen in the world outside that little valley while the sun was standing still. Such a question would be quite irrelevant. "But see," says the story, "what a great man Joshua was, that at his word the God of Israel would stop the sun and moon in their courses until his people had won their victory."

In matters of this kind men's minds move within the circle of ideas which to them are credible. Ideas outside that circle do not occur to them. It would never occur to a modern legend maker to say that his hero had made the sun stand still. He knows too well that, as far as the earth is concerned, it stands still now. The idea of stopping it would lie quite outside his circle of ideas. It would never occur to him. The ancient legend maker, however, lived in a world in which the sun not only moved but could be stopped by divine fiat, and without causing any disturbances in the world at large. It was as natural for him to think in such terms as it would be unnatural for the modern.

When these wonders are read in the light of what is common knowledge today, it is easy to say that such things do not happen. But this is superficial. It stops far short of the gist of the matter, too far short of an appreciation of the true character of such narratives. They are part and parcel of the world view in which they first appear and which they faithfully reflect. In terms of their own world they are tributes to a hero whom later generations delighted to honor. How should they acclaim him if not by ascribing to him qualities and powers beyond the ordinary? Beyond the ordinary, yes, but not be-

[5] Josh. 10:12-14.

yond the limits of what was possible and credible in the minds of those for whom and to whom the tales were first told.

The Old Testament Is Not Final

The other point which has caused such confusion about miracles has already been alluded to. It is the doctrine that what is written in the Old Testament was, in effect, written by God himself. The doctrine holds not only that the Old Testament is true, but that it must be believed as a matter of divine obligation. It is a unit in teaching and authority, and to question or to deny any statement in it is equivalent to questioning or denying God. This of course includes the matter of the so-called miracles, which, if this doctrine be true, must be believed simply because they are in the Old Testament; but the doctrine includes so much more than the question of miracles that it must be considered in its wider bearing.

It is a time-honored doctrine, and it has been sincerely held by saints and sinners throughout Christian history; but as the facts of the world have become better and better known, it has become a doctrine more and more difficult to maintain, until to some minds it is almost a yoke like the one Peter said "neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." [6] Of course Peter's "fathers" had not only borne the yoke he referred to but had rejoiced in it, just as many today bear the yoke of this doctrine gladly.

The doctrine is fundamental, and it can be reduced to comparatively simple terms. It is essentially the alternative between reliance upon a living process, in which the writings constitute but one of the factors, and reliance exclusively upon documents written two thousand and more years ago, in which case the writings constitute the only factor. It has been said of the Jews that they are "the people of a book," and this saying can be applied with considerable accuracy to Protestants since the days of Martin Luther. The Bible has taken, and still holds, a supreme place in the Protestant religion.

It is difficult to believe, however, that the men whose writings now make up the Bible ever dreamed that their work would be

[6] Acts 15:10.

given such significance. According to the best of their knowledge and belief they wrote what they thought should be written,[7] but one thing they never tried to do was to argue with each other. In all the sixteen books of the prophets, for instance, there is but a single case of what might today be called a cross reference, where a prophet is quoted by name in any other book than his own.[8] Each prophet went his own independent way. Whatever unity or even harmony the prophetic writings show is, so to speak, purely accidental.

The other writings show the same independence. The treasury of traditions contained narratives of all kinds. The Deuteronomic and Priests' Bibles were independent of each other and could almost be regarded as competitors. The works of the wise men, while showing certain traits in common, indicate no acquaintance with each other. And if ever there was a literary miscellany of independent pieces it is the book of Psalms.

The more carefully one examines the writings which make up the Old Testament, the more he is struck by their utter independence of each other. They differ not only in authors and dates but equally in purposes and ideas. Taken together they constitute what survives of a national literature whose only common factors are its nationalism and its religion, and even the conceptions of these show wide variation. On the evidence of the writings themselves it cannot be supposed that any necessary agreement was contemplated by their authors. To bring these writings together into a single volume as though they all taught the same thing and held the same points of view gives an impression of unity which the writings do not possess, and which no one of them ever claimed. It is arbitrary and misleading. It was done in all good conscience, from high motives, and has served a useful purpose in the way the writings have been preserved intact. But it went too far, and one of the most unfortunate of its results is the support it gave to the doctrine that in the Old Testament one has a consistent and unified transcript of the divine will, per-

[7] Cf. Luke 1:3.
[8] Jer. 26:18.

fect and complete. For this is the conception of these writings that has been generally accepted.

From this point of view it was but a short and easy step to the idea that this collection of writings, along with those of the New Testament, contained "all things necessary to salvation," and that no further word from God need be looked for, no matter how long the world should last, no matter what new knowledge might be gained, no matter how God's will might demand new acts and attitudes in situations utterly unknown two thousand years ago. Strange as this idea may seem when stated so bluntly, it is nevertheless the idea that has dominated all Christian history, as far as the Bible is concerned.

It has had a curious though not illogical result. The Bible has come to be regarded, in effect, as a substitute for God. If one wants to know God's will, all he needs to do is to turn to the "Book"; and if he is indifferent, the book can remain closed. Whether shut or open, it is the acknowledged source to which all can go for divine guidance and counsel. In this, the attitude of the Christian toward his Bible is almost identical with the attitude of the Jew toward his Law. In both cases devotion has its perfect work. It concentrates on a Book. And if, when it is consulted, the desired guidance is not given in so many words, some statement can be "interpreted," and then the divine authority is transferred to the interpretation. All authority, whether directly or through "interpretations," is vested in the Book.

In spite of the dominance of this theory as a theory, it has not been possible to carry it out in practice. When the theory is criticized or denied, it is passionately defended by its adherents; but when the acid test of acceptance and obedience is applied, the theory breaks down. Today the Book's demands are nowhere completely carried out. This is due partly to the fact that later ideas have come in to modify the Book's supposed demands, and partly because later circumstances have made some of the demands impossible of performance.

Different parts are rejected by different groups of believers, so that what is universally accepted for actual obedience is considerably less

than the Old Testament in its entirety. One of the boldest dismissals of a large part of the Old Testament is the dogmatic position taken in the Anglican and Methodist Articles of Religion. The article on the Old Testament states: "The law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth." Whatever reasons the framers of the article may have had for such a statement, they failed to make clear their authority for discarding so much of the Old Testament in spite of their statement that it was given by God. If the theory be true, what right has anyone to omit anything from the divine compendium? The fact is that the theory will not bear the load it is supposed to carry. The Old Testament is not a unit. It cannot be received as equally obligatory throughout, whether it is divinely inspired or not. No writing or body of writings that was completed two thousand years ago can wholly satisfy the needs of this later age.

Meeting the Difficulties: The First Answer

If, then, the Old Testament cannot be taken as a verbal transcript of the will of God for today, what shall the devout believer do who wants to keep the faith and yet reckon honestly with the results of literary and historical study? The first answer is that he can still hold fast all that is true in what he believed before. The Old Testament is all there. Everything in it that is religious, noble, profound, inspiring, beautiful, is just what it was before. The contents are unchanged. One is as free as ever to take the writings for what they are worth—and what that worth is will never be measured. The psalmists in their joys, their sorrows, and their devotions have put undying songs into the hearts of men. The prophets have awakened men to underlying principles of human conduct that would make possible a society wholesome, happy, and secure. The book of Job is a universal portrayal of the inner struggle of a baffled soul and of the spacious grandeur of the world. Ancient characters are so vividly described in the Old Testament narratives that they live as though they were of but yesterday.

This priceless literature has fixed itself imperishably in the life of the Western world, and it can never be displaced. The inspiration it has afforded has been due only in part to the idea that it had special sanctity. Far more has it been due to the recognition on the part of the reader that in this literature he hears the voices of men who themselves experienced the hopes and fears, the successes and failures, the despairs and aspirations that are the deepest facts of his own life. This is what this literature is worth, and what it will always be worth. It is a value that does not depend on mystery or magic but is inherent in the very nature of the writings themselves. So the first answer to the "true believer" who is dismayed when he hears the traditional doctrine challenged is that all that was ever in the Old Testament is still there; nothing is lost.

More than that, the Old Testament is now seen in its own greatness and significance. It is permitted to stand on its own feet. One is no longer blinded to its true character through being dazzled by an alleged sanctity which, though intended to honor it, effectively obscures the contact it has with actual human experience. When infinity is introduced as a factor in a mathematical equation, the finite factors no longer influence the result. This suggests what has happened to the Old Testament. The introduction of this divine factor, infinity, into the Old Testament in this honest but arbitrary way has literally made the human, the finite, factors negligible. Infinity has absorbed and obliterated the finite. Yet this alleged quality of divinity was not attributed to these writings until long after their authors were dead. It was gratuitously imposed upon them in the interest of later ideas, and it has led, as already stated, to placing them practically on the level of God himself.

Another aspect of the doctrine that has been overlooked is that, although it exalted the writings, it limited God's authoritative presence and action to the years when these writings first appeared. The doctrine located all effective relation between God and the believer in those ancient times. Subsequently all authoritative relation has been, according to the doctrine, mediated through those ancient documents. Where man has since found God, immediately and at

first hand, as of course he has, it has been in spite of the doctrine and not because of it. There is no question that the writings have a definite place in history and that their place is definitely bounded by the calendar; but God himself is not bound, and he must be released from the bondage in which he has been placed by earnest but mistaken souls who thought that thus they were doing him service.

The Second Answer

A second answer to the inquiring believer is that the reasonable and reverent attitude toward these writings is the attitude the original writers had toward their own and other writings in their own day. This attitude was one of perfect freedom. Writing was long subordinated to word of mouth, and only gradually grew in importance. Even after it had become an established practice no book received its fixed and final form as long as its message dealt with living issues. It was edited and expanded without hesitation. The fact that copies had to be made by hand made it easy to subordinate the literal fidelity of a new copy to the greater desirability of including additional material that was felt to be pertinent. Reference has already been made to many examples of this free treatment. Its important aspect here is the light it throws upon the point of view of the days when the Old Testament was in the making.

Writings would never have been so freely treated if it had been felt that they had something sacred about them that forbade any change. Changes were freely made, and this very freedom is sufficient evidence that there was no idea that an earlier writing was binding because it had anything divinely fixed and final about it. The most remarkable illustration of this is the treatment accorded the book of Deuteronomy. It is the only example in the Old Testament of a particular document having been officially validated as the direct will of God. As such it was placed at the head of the Deuteronomic Bible. Yet it was wholly superseded by the Bible of the priestly writers, who, though they unhesitatingly used Deuteronomic material, did so because they wanted to use it in their own production

and not because it was a written and unchangeable document. If they had held this later view, they never would have made the omissions and changes they did, nor even have undertaken their own independent work, which in such a case would have been quite superfluous, not to say irreverent.

The Third and Most Fundamental Answer

The third answer is perhaps the most fundamental of the three. It is that men may and do find God today as truly, as immediately, as authoritatively, and in the same way, as did the men of old. The Old Testament itself supplies the evidence for this. Obviously those men of old had no Old Testament, for the Old Testament consists of reports of their works and their words, and these could hardly have been written in advance. It was only after the heroes had performed their exploits that there could be stories to tell about them. It was only after prophets and psalmists had spoken that their words could be collected. The Old Testament is not a collection of advance programs from which the individuals concerned could learn what to say and do next, but a literary deposit of what already had been said and done. The Old Testament is the product of their religion and not the source of it. They did not have to learn their religion from the Old Testament; it was their religion that inspired the Old Testament. They found God first and told their experiences afterward. They were convinced that the living God could be found in their own day and that neither he nor they had to depend upon, or be bound by, what had been done or said—or written—in the past.

It is not proposed, of course, that all the Hebrews of Old Testament times moved on the high levels of thought and life represented by the writers of these books. People differed among themselves as much then as they do now. The men whose writings are now in the Old Testament stood head and shoulders above the rank and file. They represent the best the nation produced rather than a cross section of the whole population. The point is not how adequately they represented their contemporaries but that they found God, so to speak, on their own responsibility.

The temperaments, interests, intellectual abilities, and spiritual urgencies that made up their personalities, leading and enabling them to do what they did, both invite and elude psychological exploration. But in this they do not differ from patriots, poets, or other creative spirits all through history. Their interpretations of the past and their proposals for the present and future took their start, of course, from inner convictions and aspirations which have always been the motive power of the spiritual leaders of mankind. The forms of their messages depended on their personalities and their purposes. They were always looking ahead, concerned with what should be changed, corrected, initiated, in order to carry out what they believed to be the will of God.

In the light of these inner demands which for them were the voice of God they observed the national and religious life of their time. They received what had come down to them in the course of history and proceeded to accept, modify, or discard it on the basis of their own new and independent ideas. Whatever writings were available they used or ignored as they saw fit. They were not bound by writings. If rituals and ceremonies seemed inadequate or at fault, they changed or dismissed them. No tradition was inviolable. Crises would arise, of war, pestilence, famine, storms, and earthquakes; but these were seen as manifestations of divine power and purpose, and were so described. Sun, moon, and stars, springtime and harvests, the heavens and the earth, all were the Lord's and showed his glory.

That these men of old were ignorant of many facts about the world is natural but not important. What is important is that they accepted the world as it was known in their time and found God there. Belief in his presence was their act of faith, and to him and to his service they gave themselves. Their words are but the utterance and evidence of their faith; and it is this faith, with all its limitations of human error and incompleteness, but with all its splendor of courage and devotion, that is the living voice of the Old Testament.

This voice can be heard today wherever men seek the living God in the present world. It can be heard wherever men in their search

for God accept all that the past has given for what it is worth, but are no more bound by it than the Old Testament writers were bound by what was past in their day. It can be heard wherever men are willing to strike out new paths as did those men of old. That living voice, which is God's voice, will have some things to say which will be new and will go beyond what "was said to them of old time." This is a vaster world than the world as it was imagined by the ancients, a vaster physical world and a vaster thought world. When one thinks of all that has been revealed by telescope and microscope, with no limits yet in sight in either direction, he realizes what a miniature world the world of the ancients really was.

Much more significant than the differences of physical magnitudes is the all-embracing difference involved in the idea of nature and natural law. The world as now understood is not subject to the interventions and manipulations of independent personal or near-personal powers, whether malignant or benign; but it obeys principles of cause and effect which are impersonal, discoverable, reliable. The ancient world was in this respect a world of magic, in which nature was controlled by means that were mysterious and occult, means which had no necessary relation in kind with the effects produced. This is why it was "natural" for the legend makers to tell and believe the things which, as "miracles," have caused so much confusion in later times.

That old world is gone forever, and man's control of his vaster world not only is of a different kind but has a correspondingly vaster scope. Knowing the procedures of the ordered and integrated world, man can organize them to achieve results that would have been even less credible to the ancient world than the ancient "miracles" are to this. It is in this "new heavens and new earth" that the living voice of the Old Testament may, and must, be heard.

The vaster scope of the thought world is seen not only in the New Testament but in the work of the philosophers and poets, the saints and reformers, who have lived during the last two thousand years. Some of them have been content to elaborate the scriptural tradition, but others have dealt, and are dealing, with the problems and the

new environment that the ancients did not know. In the present world the traditional expression "thus saith the Lord" has fallen out of use. But the fact is as vital and as valid now as ever. Today men speak in terms of truth as it is being progressively discovered. When the men of old said, "Thus saith the Lord," they simply personalized and dramatized the same idea that the modern man has in mind when he says, more abstractly, but with equal conviction, devotion—yes, and authority—"This is the truth as I see it." Then and now the truth that men find is but a fragment of the whole, but in each case it is truth's latest outpost, and it deserves, as it receives, the believer's supreme devotion.

It is in this perspective that the Old Testament finds its true place. It is not a textbook arranged in orderly sequence to be learned by rote. It is a source book in which have been gathered up all sorts of materials which, before they can be serviceable, must be sifted, analyzed, and finally evaluated, in the light of present knowledge. This involves one of the most delicate and difficult readjustments that religious thought has ever been called upon to make. The religion involved had its origin in the ancient world. Its forms, its statements, its vocabulary, all belong there. Its originators would never have dreamed of taking into account facts and conditions utterly unknown to their time. They would have trusted the Lord to say the word in season when the season came. As a consequence, the ancient world view and its religious ideas were so closely interwoven that to question one seemed to question both; to reject the ancient world view seemed to reject the religious ideas associated with it.

This is the dilemma which confronts many believers the more securely the modern knowledge of the world establishes itself. It is a dilemma which was, and is, more serious and far-reaching than the perplexities caused by the literary analysis of the documents. Whatever phases or factors of the religion of the Old Testament are dependent upon a world view that is now known to have been in many respects erroneous must be relegated to that Old Testament world where they originated and where they were at home. The traditional reliance upon the letter of the Old Testament must be

surrendered in favor of the spirit exemplified in the writers themselves. They were aware of a divine presence and a living voice—the living voice of the Old Testament—the experience of a living process—of the spirit which giveth life in contrast to the letter which killeth.

The God of this greater modern world is concerned with the same purposes and methods as of old, as far as these can be perpetuated and maintained in the world today; but he is also concerned with purposes and methods that could not be "known of old." He will be found, and is being found, by men of faith commensurate with the new world and the new needs who see God in the present world and use its own forms and vocabulary. One follows the Old Testament truly when he acts in the spirit of those from whom the Old Testament came. Such a one hears the living voice that inspired these writings in the first place.

One of the most valuable results of this understanding of the Old Testament is that it makes very clear the distinction between the accidental and the enduring. The underlying motives and aims emerge as constituting the real continuity between the old world and the new. Some must be discarded, but what is vital remains; and to this is added all that the new world of fact and thought has contributed to the hope and faith of those who today are moving toward "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Entering New Worlds

The situation is not wholly novel. In past times there had been similar experiences which, though not as far-reaching as the present one, were not far from it in principle. When the Hebrews moved from the wilderness into the cultivated land of Canaan, they entered what was in many ways a new world, with different ways of living and a different religion. For a time the respective deities of wilderness and Canaan were acknowledged without a feeling of any underlying conflict between them. Then the prophets arose, denouncing the worship of Canaan and demanding the exclusive worship of the God of Israel. This initiated a conflict that dragged along for cen-

turies, and was not finally settled until the Exile. When that happened, the prophets were vindicated, and the God of Israel was recognized by the Hebrews as their only true God.

Babylon was substantially another new world, into which in the Exile the Hebrews were thrust against their will, and in which they felt at first that their religion had no place.[9] But again prophets arose and with divine daring claimed this new world for their God. Once more it was affirmed that their God inhabited and controlled a new world. They were able to "sing unto the Lord a new song." [10] Here was involved an expansion in the conception of God comparable to that which had arisen in Canaan.

The Christian movement had hardly begun when it faced a similar experience. Beginning in the thought world of the Jewish religion, it found itself thrust out into a strange new world of Greek philosophy. New adjustments again had to be made, and they were made by men who not only were Christians but were at home in the new world of Greek thought. Here, as in the previous instances, the new world seemed at first a barrier to further advance, an enemy to the true faith, and an obstacle to be overcome and destroyed. But the fact was that in all these cases the new world was proved to be not a new hindrance but a new home.

The successive changes in the idea of God are not to be understood as twistings of an old conception into a shape that would fit into the frame of a new environment. They were due to the discovery that the new, vaster, hitherto unknown world was the true one; and that if God had not been known previously in these truer, vaster terms, then men's knowledge of him had been to that degree inadequate and incomplete.

It was the world in which people were actually living; and one of the essential conditions which religion had to meet, if it was to articulate vitally with the life of its day, was the restatement of its meaning in terms of its new environment. The process was similar in each case: first, the new world, of fertility, or political horizons, or

[9] Ps. 137.

[10] Isa. 42:10-12.

philosophy; second, the feeling of isolation and antagonism; and third, the rise of men of faith and vision who claimed and conquered the new world for their God. But there was a still more significant world at hand.

The so-called new worlds just mentioned were all based on a fairly general agreement as to the nature of the physical world, but the time came at last for the exploration of the physical universe. Babylon was larger than Palestine; Greek philosophy went immeasurably beyond the comparatively simple reflections of the early Christians; but Copernicus and Galileo announced a world so new and so great that previous comparisons between old worlds and new worlds fade into insignificance.

Copernicus, of course, is simply a conspicuous leader in the long line of men who, to an amazed, often incredulous, and sometimes actively hostile people, have been telling what they have discovered in the world about them. Religion is not the only field in which adjustments have had to be made. The new discoveries have often been so revolutionary that they have been resisted by scientists as well as saints. Their full implications, especially in social and religious fields, have hardly, even yet, been developed. But the process goes on, and everyone who has the cause of religion at heart is concerned in the great enterprise.

The Old Testament not only records the way the revelations of God have come but, in the very act of making such a record, shows the impossibility of any single revelation being final or complete. Nothing is plainer than the way one Old Testament revelation follows and supersedes another. There seems to be no end of the men who, one after another, and in God's name, arose to announce some new principle and to correct or abolish an old one. New problems arose with a new day to which yesterday offered no solution; new goals appeared, new motives awoke, new knowledge of men and of the world asserted itself, all unprovided for by earlier revelations. What should be done? Nothing? That would be abject surrender —an intellectual, ethical, and religious surrender utterly repugnant to the spirit of the Old Testament. In those days it was believed and

verified that new conceptions of God were to be expected and welcomed at every new turn of the road. Nothing in the Old Testament—nor in the New, for that matter—indicates any revocation of that principle. He who has really found his way about in his Old Testament lives, as one might say, in a spirit of divine expectancy. He may not be the one through whom the new revelation comes, but he is of that devoted minority that is looking in the divine direction.

How, or where, or when such men are "produced," or in what degree they represent their people, who can say? One might as well ask where or how poets are "produced," or preachers, or to what extent these represent their people. What "produced" Washington or Lincoln, Dante or Beethoven, Martin Luther or John Wesley? To what extent were these even approximately representative? Not at all on the basis of arithmetic, but profoundly so if one realizes that they represent the fact that the human spirit can seek and find out the deep things of God.

And those who find the deep things of God, find God. They point out what dimmer sight has failed to see. They speak the language of the new world, which has always been God's world; and through them one hears again the living voice of the Old Testament.

NOTES

I. The Septuagint

The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. was more than the beginning of the Babylonian exile. It was also the beginning of movements of Jews to different parts of the world and the establishment of Jewish colonies of varying size and importance. The work of Alexander the Great carried Greek culture and the Greek language throughout the wide circle of his conquests. It became inevitable that as time passed there should be an increasing number of Jews for whom Greek was the native tongue. If the Hebrew Scriptures were to be made practically accessible to a Greek-speaking Jew they would have to be translated into Greek, for the same reason which at a later time necessitated their translation into Latin, and still later into the numerous tongues provided for by modern Bible societies.

The earliest translation of the Hebrew Scriptures was the Greek one prepared for Greek-speaking Jews. Legends about its origin are associated with the number seventy, involving perhaps seventy translators, whence the name "Septuagint" (Greek, "seventy"), often abbreviated "LXX." It was not made by a single translator, but was carried on during a couple of centuries. It was completed before the beginning of the Christian era. Copies were necessarily made by hand, so that the transmission of these documents involved the vicissitudes of all ancient documents, including the Scriptures. Its early date makes it invaluable for the light it throws on the Old Testament, reflecting as it does the Hebrew Scriptures as they were extant among Greek-speaking Jews at the time the translation was made.

The quotations from the Old Testament found in the New Testament are mostly from this Septuagint translation rather than from the original Hebrew, suggesting that to the New Testament writers, all of whom wrote in Greek, it was the more familiar form in which the Old Testament was then current. After the New Testament writings came to be regarded as "scripture," the Septuagint was bound up with them, thus putting into the hands of Greek-speaking Christians a complete Bible

in their own language. It is in these first Christian Bibles that the Septuagint has been preserved.

2. The Documents of the Hexateuch

The literary analysis of the Hexateuch (the first six books of the Old Testament) has led to the hypothesis that documents which were originally independent, and which long preceded the present Hexateuch, have been drawn upon for the material of which the Hexateuch is now composed. This is the well-known "documentary hypothesis." It is supported by such a mass of evidence that it has determined the whole course of Old Testament study. The form in which it is generally held recognizes four main documents. These also show evidence of a more or less composite character. The four main documents are usually represented by the letters *J, E, D,* and *P,* which are the initial letters of words that characterize the several documents. The letter *J* is taken from JHVH, the four letters which in the Hebrew Old Testament stand for the name of the national deity of the Hebrews. The incorrect form "Jehovah" has established itself as the English substitute for this ancient name; it probably should be "Jahveh." [1] It is the characteristic of this document that it regards this name as known and in general use long before the days of the Hebrews.[2] By a coincidence *J* stands also for the kingdom of Judah, where, it is generally supposed, this document originated in, or not long after, the reign of Solomon.

The letter *E* comes from the Hebrew word "Elohim," the general term for deity—not a proper name like "Jahveh." It is usually translated "god" or "God"—any god, the god of the Hebrews or of any other nation. This document regards the name "Jahveh" (Jehovah) as unknown until it was revealed to Moses, differing in this from J. By a coincidence *E* stands also for Ephraim, a designation often used for the northern kingdom, where, it is generally supposed, this document originated in the course of the century following the appearance of J. These two main documents contain the familiar stories now found in the Hexateuch—the stories which are discussed in Chapter IV of this book.

D stands obviously for "Deuteronomy" and is used not only for that book but also for subsequent writings that use the vocabulary and ideas

[1] See above, p. 215, note 4.

[2] Gen. 4:26.

of Deuteronomy. It is this D material that is discussed in Chapters I and II.

P stands for "priest" or "priestly," and is used for the document that consists almost wholly of rituals and ceremonies that are obviously under the direction of a priesthood. Its character and purpose are discussed in Chapter III.

3. Chapters and Verses

The familiar chapter divisions of the English Bible do not appear earlier than the thirteenth century, nor the verse divisions before the sixteenth century. This means that these were not found in the original biblical writings but were imposed upon them more than a thousand years after they were written, and consequently that they necessarily lack the importance that has so unfortunately been attributed to them. They were adopted as a convenient device for purposes of reference, a purpose they serve quite satisfactorily. When the verses are printed, and regarded, as brief statements each one of which is complete in itself, the result is hopelessly misleading. This difficulty can be overcome in some degree by the use of a Bible printed in paragraphs rather than verses or, even better, as in Moulton's work mentioned in the bibliography; but in no case can there be a substitute for the reading of any passage according to its sense, regardless of how it may be placed on the page. It must be taken in its continuity and in its entirety, and any single statement must be understood in the light of the whole passage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

There was a time when the ideal Bible student was a "man of one book"—meaning the Bible alone. That time has passed. The Bible is not self-explanatory. To discover what it really means one must have books that will lead him back into the world from which the Bible came so that he can know something of the origins, the literary character, the points of view, the purposes, of the writings that now compose the Bible. Without the information that such books give, the Bible reader cannot know how mistaken he may be in his supposed understanding of what he reads. There is a wealth of books from which to choose, but the ones named here, or others that cover the same ground, are essential for one who undertakes to approach the Bible with the seriousness it deserves. It would be much easier to prepare a long list than this short one; but, brief as this one is, it will make a good beginning, and will indicate the backgrounds that underlie what this book has tried to say.

A good translation is, of course, indispensable. The American Standard Revised Version is the best and most practical; but one should have at least two translations at hand, if only as visual evidence that no translation can be a final substitute for the original. The King James Version is only one of many. Unfortunately it is seriously misleading by being printed in verses. Moffatt's is entertaining but too arbitrary to be reliable. The best second is Smith and Goodspeed's *The Complete Bible: An American Translation,* published by the University of Chicago Press (Chicago, 1939).

The following general works are recommended:

The Modern Reader's Bible, by Richard G. Moulton. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1895 and after. Published originally in small separate parts, pocket size, but now also complete in one volume. Not a new translation—the English Revised Version is used. It is still the best for suggesting the biblical literary forms, and it also has valuable introductions to the several books. If the biblical writings were being written today for the first time, this is probably the way they would be printed.

The Old Testament: Its Making and Meaning, by H. Wheeler Robinson. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1937. Short, simple, ex-

cellent, and complete enough to give a well-balanced view of the field and fruits of Old Testament study. The best for its purpose.

Essentials of Bible History, by Elmer W. K. Mould. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1940. This is the best single volume or compendium of nearly everything one would want to know about the Bible. The Old Testament part (400 pages) can be had separately. It covers a wide field in a condensed way but it includes more than just the "essentials," and also more than history. A bigger and better book than the title would suggest.

A Guide to Understanding the Bible, by Harry Emerson Fosdick. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938. A suggestive discussion of the way the development of great religious ideas is represented in the biblical writings, and the different meanings the same word had at different times.

The question of commentaries can have no final answer; they are too numerous, too different, and are appearing too continuously. Two good series of volumes covering the whole Bible are: (1) *The Cambridge Bible,* published by the Cambridge University Press, begun in 1880; and (2) *The New Century Bible,* published by the Oxford University Press, begun in 1904. These are scholarly and, in the best sense, popular—that is, not more technical than the intelligent layman needs. In the Cambridge series especially to be recommended are the volumes on Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Daniel. In the New Century series equally to be recommended are the volumes on Genesis, Samuel, Kings, and Jeremiah.

The best bird's-eye view of all the Old Testament books may be found in a good introduction, such as the *Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* by Oesterley and Robinson, published by The Macmillan Company (New York, 1934). This contains also an excellent bibliography for those who wish to make further and more intensive explorations in the field of the Old Testament. If, however, one wishes to make a really thorough study of the Old Testament literature, he should consult *Introduction to the Old Testament* by Robert H. Pfeiffer, published by Harper and Brothers (New York, 1941). This is a monumental work and will probably be the standard in its field for many years to come.

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